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THE INVISIBLE GLORY



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John Wren Sinclair
George St Andrews

THE INVISIBLE GLORY

SELECTED SERMONS PREACHED BY

GEORGE HOWARD WILKINSON, D.D.

*Somewhile Vicar of S. Peter's, Eaton Square, S.W. ;
also, Lord Bishop of Truro ; and, at his death, Most Rev. the
Bishop of S. Andrews, Primus of the Scottish Church*

WITH A PREFACE BY THE RIGHT REV.

THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON

"He endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible"

NEW IMPRESSION

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PREFACE

I FEEL it a great honour to be asked to write a preface to these sermons by one so greatly loved by so many ; and to be asked, not because of my official position but, because—to quote his children's letter—I was “his very particular friend.”

How little I ever dreamt of being given such a title, when as a young man of twenty, just leaving Oxford, I first read, and then fed upon, the books containing his addresses, which were then being given, or rather had just been given, in S. Peter's, Eaton Square !

The Christian life there portrayed was a revelation to me : the close intimacy with a personal LORD ; the combination of a free Gospel of forgiveness with a belief in a Divine Society ; the firm dealing with one's own soul and the souls of others, advocated in the little booklet *Break up your Fallow Ground* ; all these things, I see now, were shown me by GOD through the teaching of George Wilkinson, and, as to me, so also to thousands of others.

The first time, however, that I saw the man who was to have so great an influence over my life was ten years later, when, invalided from his work in Truro, he was staying, unknown to me, in London.

I had been preaching one Sunday evening in S. Peter's, Eaton Square, having come to London the year before, 1889, and, after the sermon, when alone in the vestry, *some one* stood by my side. He had

been up in the gallery all the time, and although I had never even seen his photograph, I knew by instinct, before he told me, who he must be.

As I am asked to give a vivid portraiture of the man as I knew him, I say at once that, although what he said to me is too sacred to repeat, I felt from the first moment what I felt at the last moment—when I knelt to receive his blessing three weeks before he died—that in his presence—more than in the presence of any other man on earth—I knew in some degree what it must have been to have been in the visible Presence of our Blessed LORD Himself.

And yet the fact that he inspired such a feeling did not interfere in the least with a perfect naturalness and brightness in his intercourse with others, and especially with young men.

I remember well that, after carrying me off to supper with him that evening which I have already mentioned, his first proposal was that he should come down and back up, in some way, my work in Bethnal Green, and, sure enough, the very next Sunday, he was tramping round Bethnal Green behind a very loud brass band, as we of the Oxford House beat up the men of the district for a Club Service. Never shall I forget how happy he was that day, and with what overflowing spirits he made friends with the fifteen or twenty young Oxford men who entertained him at luncheon after the "march past."

This combination of gaiety and seriousness, this swift passing from the amusing story to discussion on the deepest subjects, I found to be typical of one who from this time became my new and great friend. On the top of the Oxford House, overlooking the miles of smoking chimneys, he would probe me as to whether the mass of outward work among the crowded population was chok-

ing my inward life, and whether—as he used to express it—the inward was keeping pace with the outward.

And when, later on, it came to pass after his appointment to S. Andrews, that no holiday of mine in Scotland was complete without a few days with the Bishop (afterwards “the Primus”), I found that, to see him really at his very best, you must see him in the radiant happiness of his home; radiant in spite of that mark of the Cross on it left by the “passing” of his wife years before, or rather in some sense all the more *because* of it—for you saw before you a living example of the triumph of the Christian Faith over death.

And that brings me to try and single out the most striking characteristics of that friend whose neverfailing presence in my room on every visit which he paid to London I shall miss to the day of my death.

First, I must mention his FAITH. If ever there was a man who had his “head above the mists,” it was the Bishop of S. Andrews; as he spoke of our LORD, you felt he saw Him, and your own faith in CHRIST’S Presence and love grew as he spoke of Him.

“What must HE think of it all?” he has often said to me, when we spoke together of the sin and misery of London.

And his faith came out perhaps most of all in his belief in prayer. We have all read the last speech on prayer he made before he sank down to his rest, but how often in those or other words has he urged the same thing!

“Take the trouble to God, take the money worry, take the needs of the parish, of the Church, *and spread them before God*, and the need will surely be met,” and when you think how again and again his trust in God was honoured, how, loyally assisted by others, he raised the whole money for the Mission of Help to South Africa

and countless other works during his life, we have in him a living instance that "the prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Or, to take another instance, of his belief in PRAYER. On almost his last visit to Fulham, I had been telling him that I had a very difficult interview in my private room at twelve on which much depended. Happening to go into the drawing-room at twelve, he saw a number of my other guests there. He said to them, "I think you ought to know that the Bishop has a very anxious interview just now; don't forget him in your prayers," and turned to go. Then, thinking, as he explained to me afterwards, that this was rather a poor way of helping me, he turned back into the room and said, "In fact, let us all kneel down now together and pray for him," and there in the drawing-room, unknown to me, he led the guests in prayer for me as I held my interview next door in my private room.

The next characteristic which stands out to my mind is his touching HUMILITY. He was willing and anxious to learn from anybody, and to be helped by any one.

I remember well one day when I was walking with him in Scotland, I said to him, "I often think of your lesson of 'the law of *day by day* as one of the laws of the kingdom." He looked quickly at me and said, "*Did I say that?*" "Why, of course you did," I said in surprise, "there is a whole chapter on it in the book entitled *The Laws of the Kingdom*."

He said nothing more at the time, but next day he said to me, "It was curious your saying yesterday about the law of day by day. I *wanted* it said to me yesterday, I was worrying dreadfully about something."

And then, who that knew him will ever forget his PASTORAL SPIRIT? How he managed to shepherd so many individual souls, God alone knows, but he was

a true shepherd above all, in this, that he *went before you*. Before you found out you wanted him, he was there ; he planned little visits to you to find out how you were ; he did not wait to be asked to come.

Praying as he did for those he helped, he seemed to have a divine instinct when they wanted special help ; he did not spare the plain warning word ; he was there beside you waving a danger signal before you had yourself seen the danger ; he was ready with comfort almost before the blow fell ; and yet so far from letting you depend on him alone ; he was ever leading you to trust more and more to JESUS CHRIST Himself.

Such was the man whom we knew and loved, and feel that we know and love still ; this was the man so dear to his own children, and also to his spiritual children throughout the world ; this is the man who spoke these sermons which are printed in this book ; this is the man who through these printed pages will speak these sermons still to the souls of men.

We send them out with the prayer that they may guide, warn, and comfort many souls, and that they may be some substitute (however poor) for his presence to those of his spiritual children who are coming from the ends of the earth this spring to the Pan-Anglican Congress, and who will miss him so sorely.

May many a soul who reads these sermons say with gratitude, "He being dead, yet speaketh."

A. F. LONDON.

Ash Wednesday, 1908.

NOTE

Local references have usually been deleted, but, in certain cases, as in the Sermon on Unity, preached in 1901, it has been thought better to leave intact the allusions to temporary circumstances. Only the Farewell Address to Workers at S. Peter's, and the Last Sermon have been dated.

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PART I

THE MESSAGE OF PEACE

"He is ready to receive us."

I

ONE WHOM YE KNOW NOT

"There standeth One among you, Whom ye know not."

S. JOHN i. 26.

"TWO worlds are ours," my brethren. There is a world which we can see, and there is a world which we cannot see.

The day is coming when that invisible world by which we are now surrounded, and those invisible persons who are to-day gazing upon us, will be as clearly seen and known as are our visible friends and companions, the houses and the buildings and the churches that we see in the ordinary walks of our everyday existence. But, in the meantime, the angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, and God Himself—the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST—are hidden from us; hidden, as it were, by a curtain, thin indeed, but sufficient to hide from us that invisible glory. God alone, the Almighty God, is able to draw back this curtain. And the word by which this uplifting of the veil is described in Holy Scripture is "revelation"—re-velation, i.e., a drawing back of the veil.

The point which I am striving to bring out before you—depending on your prayers for the light of the HOLY SPIRIT—during the season of Epiphany is this.

Whatever be the instrumentality by which Almighty God thus manifests Himself—whether it be through the Sacraments of the Church, or the clergy, or the Holy Scriptures, or the ordinary events of our life, the Eternal FATHER does not force upon us the recognition of this eternal and invisible kingdom. The mode of the “revelation” is such that the ordinary superficial observer may see nothing of that eternal glory which God is manifesting to His saints. He may see nothing beyond the outward and visible surroundings of that invisible glory ; nothing beyond what is commonplace, ordinary, unattractive, or even repulsive.

To-day, I wish to illustrate this truth, recognizing the difficulty of the subject ; feeling how, by one ill-chosen word, the preacher may seem an irreverent messenger of the Most High ; yet believing that it is of vital importance in the present day that the truth should be simply and clearly set forth. Depending, therefore, upon the Blessed Spirit’s enlightening and restraining grace—praying that whatever is said amiss may be overruled by His almighty power—I desire this morning to show you how this principle is illustrated in that great “revelation” of God which has been given to us, once and for ever, in the Person of JESUS CHRIST.

“God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.” “God was manifest in the flesh.” (*Heb. i. 1, 2 ; 1 Tim. iii. 16.*)

Observe the point with which we are concerned. It is not the thought of the wondrous condescension of God—the marvel that God was ever “manifest in the flesh” —that man was ever permitted to see

his Creator, veiled in a creature-form. It is not in that aspect that I am considering the Incarnation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST to-day. The truth which I wish to help you to consider is this: that when the LORD GOD did thus assume the creature form—when GOD was thus manifest in the flesh—the outward appearance was so ordinary, the outward words were so simple, the outward acts so commonplace, that He could stand in the midst of the Church of that day unrecognized!

It is perfectly true that, whenever it was necessary, He asserted the fact that He and His FATHER were one. It is perfectly true that, whenever it was necessary, He said words like these: "For this end I was born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth": "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of GOD": "Thou sayest that I am a King": "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." Whenever it was necessary, the LORD JESUS CHRIST asserted that He was very GOD. And it is also true that there was something in Him—there were flashes of light breaking forth continually from behind the cloud of the humanity—which gradually enabled those who were with Him to rise up to the conception of His Divinity; to say, "Thou art the SON of GOD": "My LORD and my GOD." Those who had ears to hear, heard; those who had their eyes opened to see, saw. But the mass of the people of Israel saw in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. They put Him aside. It was so commonplace! If He had been reared in the courts of a Pharaoh, if He had only worn raiment of camel's hair, like John the Baptist, and stood alone in the wilderness, then crowds would probably have been attracted, and would have con-

sidered Him to be the Messiah. It was the ordinary commonplace exterior which made those proud Israelites, those self-satisfied teachers, those worldly-minded people, entirely lose sight of the fact that they had in the midst of them One Who was very God, God of God, Light of Light.

Now, my brethren, we are very ready to condemn the Jews in this matter. May I ask you for a few moments to try to realize the condition of Israel when JESUS CHRIST appeared in their midst?

If any of you have ever travelled in Palestine, bring it back to your mind this morning ; or, by the help of any book of travels, try to make up for your absence in body by going in thought to that sacred spot. Try to realize the actual facts as to the outward appearance of such a man as JESUS CHRIST was when He was upon earth ; try to throw yourselves into the condition of the persons among whom JESUS CHRIST was living ; and then transfer those surroundings, in imagination, to this nineteenth century.

Let us try to picture it. Let us go away from this London to our country home, and in the village close by—a village with nothing remarkable about it except that the character of the people is so bad that it is a proverb in the country, “Nothing good comes out of that Nazareth”—there is a carpenter and his wife ; good, honest people, living quiet lives, regular at church, working at the big house of the village from time to time ; bringing, as years roll on, a little child with them ; training him gradually so that he becomes known in the neighbourhood as “the carpenter,” or the “carpenter’s son,” working with his father. We become interested in the boy as he increases in wisdom and stature. He is growing. He is cleverer than other boys. When he went to the country town, to a public

catechizing of all the children in the Sunday schools, the teachers were quite surprised at the answers that he gave; they were astonished at his understanding and his answers. He has now come home again; years are rolling on. He is "a remarkable child," nothing more. So, silently and quietly, that boy grows up, in that poor home, in that wicked village, for thirty years.

Now, dear brethren, try to realize all that I have been sketching. Follow the line of thought—fill in the sketch for yourselves. See Him sitting there by the well-side, very tired, waiting for some of His friends who have gone into yonder village to buy Him food; hear Him asking for a drop of water from a poor woman who has come to draw water from the well. Follow Him thus, all through, to the end.

And then, in some measure realizing it all by thinking of our own home and village, and the village carpenter of the nineteenth century, I ask you to consider how very trying it would have been to us if He had come into the midst of England to-day, and said, "The entire politics of England are wrong!" Or, suppose He had come into this church—to me, the preacher, and said, "The whole doctrine that you are giving out in the Name of God is false; you are binding burdens on others that you are not carrying yourself; you are teaching that which you have devised out of your own mind, and not by the revelation of heaven." Suppose this village boy, this carpenter whom we have seen in everyday life, coming to do the work of the house, this man who had never known "letters," though "the common people heard Him gladly," who was without any of the right to rule, which is the hereditary privilege of the great and the noble; this man who had never been at college, with no university education,

no knowledge of Greek and Latin, perhaps ; imagine this man standing up in our midst and saying, "I am the SON of GOD." "I and My FATHER are one."

"He hath spoken blasphemy ! He is guilty of death ! Crucify Him !"

And JESUS CHRIST was not surprised. He had counted the cost. He judged not. Silently, speaking to GOD His FATHER ; silently, despised and rejected of men ; silently He manifested His glory to the few humble souls whom He was training for the regeneration of humanity. O wondrous silence ! O mystery of self-restraint ! "GOD manifest in the flesh !" "Is not this the carpenter ?" "There standeth One among you, Whom ye know not."

THREE THOUGHTS IN CONCLUSION

The first is this. If, as I have often tried to show and hope to bring out more fully, there is a mysterious cord which binds together all the instrumentalities by which the Almighty FATHER of the universe has uplifted the veil and revealed the invisible world ; if there is a secret union which binds together God's revelation of Himself, through a Divine Saviour, through divinely-appointed Sacraments, through a divinely-inspired Word, through a divinely-commissioned Church, through a divinely-ordered life of the saints, through the divinely-arranged, though commonplace events of our ordinary life ; if, in all these different ways, God is standing in the midst of us ; and if, at the same time, it is a principle of the eternal counsels that the knowledge of the invisible glory shall not be forced upon us, how much, dear brethren, may we all be losing ! We truly have been put into the Church of God and made partakers of the glory of this new Jerusalem ; already, as the Bible tells us, brought near—not merely to be

brought near in another world—to the new Jerusalem, the heavenly Zion, made fellow-heirs with the angels and the whole company of heaven, surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, with a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, on which angels are ascending and descending; and yet, we see nothing in the daily life but the ordinary, necessary work of making money, or answering letters, or teaching children, or sweeping crossings, or making speeches in the House; seeing nothing divine, nothing glorious, in it all!

My brethren, what a revelation may we not be losing! What utter discomfiture it will be to the most advanced thinker of the day to find out that he has been all his life in the midst of God's glorious kingdom with One standing amongst us Whom he knew not; in the Bible, in the Sacraments, in the church, in the bank, in the counting-house, in the quiet home, in the letter-writing, in the daily task, the daily walk—everywhere. "Lo, I am with you always." What utter discomfiture it will be never to have discovered it till we stand face to face before Him in the glory of His Second Advent!

The second thought is this. Of what unspeakable importance it is, my dear brethren, that you and I should be keeping the eye of our soul open! As the LORD says, "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." How important, then, for you and for me to keep the eye of our soul clear.

In His tender love, as we have always heard, God has plainly told us how the eye of the soul becomes darkened. "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." The god of this world is blinding our minds, so far as we allow the old nature—even in

its most beautiful and refined and cultured forms—to be rising up; instead of keeping down the lower, the natural life, by the supernatural power of the HOLY SPIRIT; allowing ourselves to be absorbed in the things of this life—however innocent and right in themselves—the things that GOD has given to us for our pleasure, the ordinary business that we have to do, and must do. The god of this world is blinding our minds, so far as, like the Jews, we are receiving honour from man; making our speeches, writing our letters, taking our part in public life, managing our household, studying, or doing whatever we are doing for the sake of the praise that comes from man; so far as we are allowing the devil to develop in us spiritual pride, or pride of birth, or pride of intellect, or pride of anything that GOD may have given us as a means of influencing others.

Dear brethren, I beseech you to take home this thought! So far as we are doing this, we are doing what JESUS CHRIST said ruined the Jews. They had lived, age after age, according to the time-honoured principles which had been handed down from father to son—the very principles that rule now in this Britain of ours—and the LORD GOD told the Jews that they had been blinded by the god of this world. The innocent things of life—the natural love of honour and the natural love of the world, these are the things against which, at our Baptism, we were pledged to fight; the pride of life, the pomps and the vanity of the world; these things shut our eyes, year by year. These things blinded the Jews; and JESUS CHRIST tells us that they will blind us likewise. And so, we may be living with the most magnificent opportunities that were ever put within the reach of man—members of CHRIST, children of GOD, heirs of

the Kingdom of Heaven, with God all day long in our midst, and yet—seeing nothing!

Lastly; does not the heart sometimes swell with love to this Jesus of Nazareth? Is there not something in this picture, however imperfectly drawn, which must appeal with a special force to the intelligence of this nineteenth century? To the more noble spirits among us, what is the great difficulty of the present day? Is it not the difficulty of silence, of self-restraint? Am I not touching some chord that will ring back with a response to-day, when I speak such words as these? Is not that self-restraint, that silence, very hard when you are conscious that you have great powers which no one is recognizing; or when you know that you did not do something which the world judges you for having done; that you have not that evil motive which is imputed to you; that you have been misunderstood in your home, by your parents, by your children, by your party, by the world, by religious people, by those whose opinion you value, by God's own saints? My brother, have you ever felt the trial of knowing that all, and far more than all, which I have thus sketched was hidden within you, beneath the surface, and that the world which you care for saw it not; and yet, to keep silence?

"He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." "JESUS yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled." "When He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." It pleased the FATHER that the Godhead of His SON should be hidden; that divine power which shall be manifested when He comes back in His glory—it may be this very year.

Before the Presence of that divine glory, the whole

invisible world to-day is prostrating itself; the angels fall down before the eternal Throne and worship Him; it is that glorious Presence which brings forth from the spirits and souls of the righteous in Paradise the great anthem of praise, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing! Blessing and honour, and glory and power, be unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!" And yet this CHRIST, for nineteen hundred years, hides Himself! This CHRIST allows Himself to be patronized, allows His Divinity to be questioned, allows His claims to be subordinated to our ease, to our cowardice, to our fear of being thought hypocrites, of making mistakes, of being singular, of standing alone! The CHRIST subordinates all the natural impulses of His perfect humanity in the quiet calm submission of His Will, to this principle of the divine economy; that the Eternal, the Glorious, the Divine, should be so hidden in the commonplace and the ordinary, that only those who are "pure in heart"—only the purified, humble souls, and the "little children" not yet defiled—can see the glory of Him Who is standing in our midst, though we know Him not.

Is not this a Character to win us? Is not this a Nature to draw out the finest instincts of humanity? Let us glorify Him Who is, with the FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT, one GOD, world without end.

II

SEEN, IN PART

"There standeth One among you, Whom ye know not."

S. JOHN i. 26.

WHATEVER else may be uncertain, my brethren, two facts are certain. The one fact is the existence of a God. The other fact is that of our own existence. Both are equally difficult to know, in the technical philosophical sense of knowledge. Both are equally difficult to prove, in the mathematical sense of proof. Yet I suppose there is no one here who would not acknowledge those two facts: God is—I am.

This Almighty God, Who created us, has put us into this world, as a father sends his son to a public school. This world, as any student of physical science knows, is but the tiniest part of God's great universe. It is a miniature of the invisible Kingdom of God; just as a public school is a miniature of public life in England. As the boy in a public school faces, on a smaller scale, the temptations, the difficulties, the work of his after-life, so are we being prepared, in this world, for the life of the world to come.

Now, in this present world, Almighty God is continually making certain demands upon us, and in various ways supplying us with the strength in which to respond to those demands. There is a continual Epiphany; a gradual uplifting of the veil—for God's work is usually still and silent—so that a certain

portion of God's Will, of God's demands upon us, is revealed unto us. And, on the other hand, the needed grace is given, continually, and in divers manners, to enable us to say, in response to each revelation of His Will, "Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O my God."

We have already considered some of the means whereby Almighty God thus reveals to us His Will, and communicates to us the grace by which that Will is to be fulfilled. There was, primarily, the life of JESUS CHRIST on earth; GOD was manifest in the flesh. Closely linked with that are the Sacraments, the Bible, the Ministry, the Church—in its widest aspect, and the education of the ordinary daily life. And the point, you remember, which we saw as binding together all these varied instrumentalities, was this: the outside was so ordinary, so commonplace, that the vast majority of mankind, if left to themselves, would see in it nothing wonderful; they would pass it by unnoticed.

We traced the life of JESUS CHRIST upon earth. We saw how natural it was that a boy growing up in the village carpenter's shop, with the surroundings that we considered, should have been regarded by the mass of the educated people of the day as not worthy of much attention, because all that they saw outwardly was so common and ordinary. And yet we know that He, in Whom they saw no beauty that they should desire Him, was nothing less than GOD of GOD, Light of Light, very GOD of very GOD; GOD manifest in the flesh.

To-day I wish to direct your attention to the Sacraments which the LORD JESUS CHRIST appointed.

Our LORD JESUS CHRIST came into the world for a threefold purpose: to reveal the FATHER to man; to die on the Cross, so as to make an Atonement for

man's sin; and to establish upon earth a spiritual Kingdom, a Divine Society. The whole of His work on earth was always leading up to this end. "JESUS went about, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom." (*S. Matt.* iv. 23; ix. 35.) Much of the glory and magnificence of the divine mission of the SON of GOD on earth is lost, through the non-recognition of this fact. Take that word, "kingdom," and follow it, with the help of a concordance, through the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. It will open to you the magnificent idea of GOD coming on earth to establish a Divine Society—divine yet human, even as CHRIST Himself was divine yet human—in order that we might be trained, here, for the eternal, incorruptible life of the saints in glory.

In this Divine Society JESUS CHRIST appointed two Sacraments. To put it into ordinary language: some means were wanted by which men should be admitted into the Society; and something was also required by which, when admitted, they should be kept together, and known to belong to it. You follow the line of thought, brethren? I need not say that you and I, who believe the teaching of our own old Church Catechism, believe something far more than all I am saying now, about the Sacraments. We believe in the "inward and spiritual grace," as well as the "outward and visible sign," of Baptism and the LORD's Supper. But to-day we are simply looking at this plain historical fact which we find in our Bible. JESUS CHRIST, the SON of GOD, established a Society on earth; and He said that anybody who wished to be admitted into that Society must be so admitted by Baptism, and that water must be part of that Baptism. And then, secondly, He said that anybody who wished to continue in the Society must from time to time receive what we now

call the Sacrament of the LORD'S Supper, or Holy Communion.

Now observe how, in these two Sacraments, appointed by JESUS CHRIST, the same law is manifested—a commonplace outside, veiling from the mass of the people something divine and glorious, transcending all human language.

As in the life of CHRIST, beneath the commonplace exterior, there was the hidden Divinity, the glory of the Godhead, the Eternal SON of the Eternal FATHER; so, in the Sacraments, beneath the commonplace outside, there is hidden an inward and spiritual grace, too transcendent to be defined, too glorious to be expressed in any human language; nothing less, indeed, than the communication of the divine grace and strength of the Creator to the beings whom He has brought into existence!

Look for a moment at the outside. Two men, journeying together, come to a stream. One says, "Behold, here is water"; and he is baptized by the other, in the Name of our LORD. Common enough, anywhere! "Behold, here is water!" What is more common?

Or, again, we see a few poor people meeting together, singing a hymn, saying a few words, eating some bread, and drinking some of the wine of the country, mere "creatures of bread and wine"; what more common? Or, look around in England itself, especially as it was a few years ago, in some out-of-the-way country church. Baptism administered in a way that it would be irreverent even to describe; Holy Communion with the dirty surplice, the torn Communion-cloth, the bottle in which the wine was taken to church, hardly hidden even from the eyes of the worshippers! The outside common, ordinary, vulgar!

Now, without attempting, this morning, to define the words, we believe the teaching of our Prayer Book. And in the Office for Holy Communion, and in the Church Catechism, we are told that, by means of Holy Communion, "we dwell in CHRIST, and CHRIST in us; we are one with CHRIST, and CHRIST with us"; we are told there that just as truly as the faithful eat the bread and drink the wine, so do they receive into their souls the Body and Blood of CHRIST. The inward and spiritual grace, what is it? "The Body and Blood of CHRIST, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the LORD's Supper." And what are the benefits? "The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of CHRIST, as our bodies are by the bread and wine." And then, as to Baptism—the outward sign, what is it? "Water." And the inward grace, what is it? "A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness: for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace." You and I know and believe all this. We have said it from our childhood.

We have seen the common outside; and yet, even if we take merely the Bible words, without attempting to explain them, in which these Sacraments are described, we realize at once that there must be something very solemn and mysterious hidden beneath that common outside; just as something divine was hidden beneath the outward form of JESUS of Nazareth. Take, for instance, such words as these:—"As many of you as have been baptized into CHRIST have put on [i.e., did put on] CHRIST." Think what this means. You were "baptized into His death." "Baptism doth also now save us . . . by the Resurrection of JESUS CHRIST." (*Gal.* iii. 27; *Rom.* vi. 3; 1 *S. Peter* iii. 21.) Observe how the Baptism is linked with CHRIST; with putting

on CHRIST, with the Resurrection of CHRIST, with salvation.

Trace it, again, in the LORD's Supper. S. Paul, whom, I suppose, even the nineteenth century would consider to have possessed sufficient instinct to separate by his human consciousness what was divine and what was human—S. Paul, whom you and I know to have been inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, tells us, as a simple matter of fact, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, that it was so important a subject that the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself taught it to him, "I received of the LORD that which also I delivered unto you." Now, what was this? "That the LORD JESUS the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My Body" (1 Cor. xi. 24). We are speaking now, remember, simply of what we might believe even if we were not Churchmen at all. JESUS CHRIST said, "This is My Body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me."

And then S. Paul goes on to say, "As often as ye eat this bread"—merely bread—"and drink this cup, ye do show the LORD's death till He come." This evidently brings us very near to GOD!

"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the LORD, unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the LORD." Now, surely, a thing that makes us "guilty of the Body and Blood of the LORD," is very solemn. "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily"—repeating it a second time—"eateth and drinketh judgement to himself, not discerning the LORD's Body." (You know of course, that at the time when this translation of the Bible was made, the word "damnation" simply meant "judgement.") "For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and

many sleep." "But," he adds, "when we are judged, we are chastened of the LORD, that we should not be condemned with the world." In other words: do not be disturbed and troubled, even if GOD does give you some great sufferings on account of your coming in a wrong way to the LORD's Table; it is in love, in order that you may not be finally judged with the rest of the wicked world, but may be saved in the day of the LORD's appearing. And then, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles tells us what the early Christians did, when CHRIST had only just gone away from them. Observe, it is merely history that I am telling you. The historian watched the progress of the infant Church; and then, he wrote the history which we find in the Acts of the Apostles. (*Acts* ii. 42, 46.) From the beginning, he says, the disciples "continued steadfastly in the breaking of the bread"—as you know it is in the Greek—"and in the prayers"; "continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house." Day by day—every day—in those days, when they realized what it was to be brought so near to GOD—when the door into heaven was opened, and the things of time and sense were seen in their true light—valueless, contemptible, compared with the glory of the Kingdom into which GOD of His own great love had elected them—day by day they continued in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers. And again, S. Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of CHRIST? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of CHRIST?" (*1 Cor.* x. 16.)

Observe, I have not explained a single syllable. My point is this. If words like these are used, with regard to Holy Communion, is it not a matter of common sense, is it not rational, to imagine that there must be some-

thing very glorious, something divine, hidden beneath that bread and wine ?

I can only now mention one practical application of the whole matter. Why do we see so little glory in it all ? Why is it that we whose position, compared with the position of the unbaptized, is as glorious as the position of a sovereign compared to that of a crossing-sweeper, do not realize the fact of our position ? Why God placed one person in the position of a sovereign, and another in that of a crossing-sweeper, none can tell. We only know that God loves both of them. And why you and I have been chosen into this Divine Society, when millions of men, like Socrates, and the great heathen chiefs of Africa and India, have never been admitted, I cannot tell. The fact, however, is this. You and I, as the Bible says, have been elected, chosen of God. We are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, . . . a peculiar people" ; called by God, to a noble life on earth, and a glorious Kingdom hereafter. (1 *S. Peter* i. 2-5 ; ii. 9 ; *Eph.* i. 4-6.) Why we have been thus chosen, I do not know. God will deal truly with the old heathen, and with the heathen of this generation also ; but you and I are chosen, not to be dumb, driven cattle, but heroes, princes, sons and daughters of the LORD Almighty. (2 *Cor.* vi. 13.) Why is it that we do not see the glory of our position ?

One answer only this morning. Because we have not time to look at it ! We have not time ! God is ready to reveal it to us ; He is lifting up the veil. But—we have not time to look beyond the veil !

And then, perhaps, God gives us an illness ; and for a while we leave the business, we leave the pleasure. Or, God takes the money away, and we have nothing to spend. Or, God calls us to watch by a sick bed. The wife dies, the child dies, the friend dies—going to the

joy of Paradise. For a week or two we are quiet ; and the veil is raised, and we look beyond. But it falls again ; we have not time ! On Sunday, there is the luncheon, and the conversation, and the letters, and what is called the "harmless gossip," if not worse. In the weekday, the excuse is, "I cannot get up in the morning for prayer ; I am tired. I cannot think at night ; I am tired," with the work, or with the pleasure. The man of business says, "I cannot do anything else but work, work, work !" On goes the great machine in this labour-field of England : and it must go on ; for "in the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread."

But, dear brethren, God says, "Be still !" God says, "One day in seven, at any rate, rest." Out of forty letters which may arrive on a Sunday, perhaps only two or three need be read on the Sunday. "Be still !"

The veil is rising ; and some of you, at least, are looking through. Some of you, beneath the common outside of the water of the brook, and the bread and wine, are seeing the invisible life and strength and joy and glory. But, dear brethren, why are any of you—you who have been baptized—living merely as Socrates ✓ might have lived ? Why is it ? Why is it, when God has loved you, died for you, given you Baptism to join you to Himself—given you the Holy Communion to feed your soul ? Why is it ?

"There standeth One among you, Whom ye know not." And what is He saying ? "Have you not time for Me Who died for you ?" What did He say when He was here upon earth ? "Will ye also go away ?" Will you go away—from the privileges of your Baptism, from the teaching your mother gave you in your Catechism, from the grace of your Confirmation, from the blessed table where His Body and Blood

are offered to you—from the joy of forgiveness, the peace of believing? Will you go away?

I beseech you, brethren, turn not away from Him! Let Him not be obliged again to say, as He said at Jerusalem, with the tears streaming down His sacred cheek, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings”—to comfort you, to bless you, to forgive you—“and ye would not!”

III

REST FOR THE WORKERS

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—S. MATT. xi. 28.

IN these words, my brethren, our Divine Master asserts His Divinity. No *human* being—of such a character as JESUS of Nazareth, "the Truth"—would venture to offer to every age, and to the dwellers in every land rest: rest to the weary body and to the troubled soul. The CHRIST, in these words, offers it to all: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." In His infinite condescension, knowing that man could not bear to look on unveiled Divinity, God veiled Himself in human flesh that He might touch us with human hands, speak to us with a human voice, love us with a human heart. But we must never forget that inside, as it were, of all this, there was the Godhead. He Who spoke the words of my text was very God.

And this comes out more clearly when the words are studied in connection with the context. "All things are delivered unto Me of My FATHER; and no man knoweth the SON, but the FATHER; neither knoweth any man the FATHER, save the SON, and he to whomsoever the SON will reveal Him." "Therefore—i.e., because I have dwelt with the FATHER from all eternity; because I know the mind of the FATHER—I am able to say that the FATHER wills that the invitation

should be universal ; and, speaking as GOD, I offer it to all—I will give you rest.”

Let us look a little more carefully at the meaning of these words. The text divides naturally into a twofold address : to those who are called to the life of work, and to those who are bidden to endure ; the active and the passive ; the toilers and the sufferers, in this great world of ours.

How, then, does the LORD JESUS CHRIST give rest to the workers ? By the power of the HOLY SPIRIT. CHRIST has gone up on high, and has sat down at His FATHER’S right hand. His work in man’s heart, and in the Church at large, is carried on through the instrumentality of the HOLY SPIRIT. By the HOLY SPIRIT JESUS CHRIST conveys rest to all who are called to labour.

Here let us be very careful not to narrow the words to what is technically called religious work. It applies, of course, to all who are working for JESUS CHRIST in a more direct manner. But the application is universal. “Come unto Me, *all* ye that labour”—in Parliament, in business, in the home, in the farm, in the counting-house, in the street, sweeping a crossing. To every human being who is complying with the great law of a fallen world : “In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread”—to *all* workers CHRIST offers, by the HOLY SPIRIT, rest.

How does He give this rest ?

First, by enlightening our understanding. All emotion—and it is most important that this should be remembered—all emotion that is not built upon knowledge must sooner or later perish. Feelings change ; emotions endure but for a day ; the first change of weather, any bodily ailment, destroys them. Religion based merely upon emotion is like a house founded on the sand. Therefore the LORD JESUS CHRIST, by means of that

Blessed Spirit Who is emphatically given to be our Teacher, first enlightens our understanding.

He shows us, first of all, that *our work is part of a divine plan*. He shows us that, whether the work in which we are engaged is what man calls noble or commonplace, it is part of a great plan by which Almighty God is establishing on earth the Kingdom of JESUS CHRIST. He teaches us that every man, whatever his occupation—provided it is a righteous occupation to which he has been called by God—is part of a great body which is carrying out the Will of the Eternal God. He teaches us that He, the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself, very God and very Man, is guiding all this complex machinery; that we are under the direction of a living Head, all-wise, all-loving; with infinite and unfailing resources upon which He can draw. He teaches us, therefore, to rest. The wife, utterly perplexed how to act, may look up to her husband, conscious of his greater knowledge; and then, having confided the difficulty to him, is at peace. The members of a Government may look up to their head, and, having satisfied themselves that he has grasped the position, rest with perfect confidence on his guidance. So it is also with ourselves, when the eyes of our understanding are enlightened to see that the FATHER has placed this world in the hands of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; that He is living, energizing, guiding, directing, by our instrumentality; that it is not we who are working, but He Who is very Man and very God. By the mere knowledge of this He gives us rest. The sense of a crushing weight resting upon us, the sense of everything depending upon our own miserable effort, is removed, when the eyes are opened and we see JESUS CHRIST.

Secondly, He teaches us another great principle,

which may be expressed by some such words as "the law of limitation." In other words, He shows us that *Almighty God is pleased, for reasons known to Himself, to allow every human being in this world to be limited*; limited by health and strength, limited by the want of full mental power, limited by the shortness of the period in which he has to work. In different ways CHRIST shows us that this is part of His FATHER's plan; not an accident, not an unfortunate occurrence, but one of the means by which He is training us for a land in which there will be no hindrance, no limitation, nothing to drive us back again; nothing to make us feel like the poor lark in its cage, striving to soar up into heaven, and only dashing itself against the bars of the miserable cage in which it is hampered and imprisoned. The LORD JESUS shows us that as long as we live on earth we shall never fully carry out our ideal: we shall be hindered by the devil, hindered by other people, hindered by our own miserable imperfections.

And then, when we have laid hold of that law, the failure in our own special department ceases to perplex and distress and crush us. The mere knowledge that we are only suffering that which is the lot of all humanity, that the particular failure which depresses is only one of the thousand failures which GOD and the angels are seeing every day, even among the most earnest, gives a calm.

Once more. The LORD JESUS CHRIST, by the HOLY GHOST, unveiling to us the meaning of the Bible, lifts us up to see that *the victory is certain*; that what we consider important may be found afterwards utterly unimportant; that we may have failed in certain departments; that there may have been times of utter crushing discomfiture; but that, in the long run, the victory is certain. He tells us that He, the LORD GOD, sent forth from heaven by

HIS FATHER, on that white horse, conquering and to conquer, will not return till He has brought with Him the army of the saints, also arrayed in robes of conquest, and with crowns of gold on their heads. He tells us that whatever was part of God's eternal plan will, sooner or later, be accomplished. And this gives calmness. If our lot is cast in a part of the battlefield where the great General allows His troops to be driven back for a time, in order that the whole line may afterwards advance with more success, it matters not. If our lot is cast in an age when everything is dark and depressing, it matters not. We know the end. It has been revealed to us by One Who is very God, before Whose eye the eternal future is as naked and open as the transient moments of our own mortal existence. And so, the knowledge that our work is part of a divine plan, the knowledge that we are subjected by God to the law of limitation, and the certainty, based on God's own eternal Word, of final victory, give rest to the understanding.

But this is not the only way in which our LORD gives rest to those who labour. By the HOLY SPIRIT, Whom He describes in the New Testament as "the finger of God" (*S. Luke xi. 20*), pointing us to certain passages in the Bible; by means of His Sacraments, by the instrumentality of His ministers, by the sympathy of friends, by the example of the saints, by the direct communication of that unspeakable gift of rest—in all these ways JESUS CHRIST pours into the very inmost chambers of our being an indefinable something which you, who have tasted it, know to be beyond all that man could put into words: "The peace of God which passeth all understanding."

Yes, my brethren, we rise in the morning—you have done it again and again, many of you—and we see the whole work of the day crowding upon us, beyond our

powers either of mind or body. We stand still, and we think of the Eternal God. Then we divide our work; the work that is necessary for to-day, the work that can be rightly postponed. We are confident that for the day's work strength will be given from above. And so, calmly, having first stood still and received the divine gift of rest, we go forward; we go out to the varied enterprises of our manifold existence.

And the difference, my brethren, is simply unspeakable. Left to ourselves, we are like the sea, tossing up the mire and clay, foaming and dashing against the granite rocks, ever ebbing and flowing, never continuing in one stay. Filled with the rest that flows from beneath the Throne of God and of the Lamb, having drunk of that water which flows from the crystal sea, before His face Who is to look on like the jasper and the sardine stone, around Whose Throne is the emerald rainbow; in other words, realizing the power and the love of God, our life becomes, in this strange, restful working, not like the troubled sea, but like the river, recognizing the law of limitation, flowing calmly on to its appointed end.

“For restless as the moaning sea,
The wild and wayward will
From side to side is wearily
Tossing and changing still:
But, swayed by Thee, 'tis like the river,
That down its green banks flows for ever,
And calm and constant, tells to all,
The blessedness of that sweet thrall.”

My brethren, I have spoken to workers only, and the time is exhausted. To the sufferers—to those who are passing through the “great tribulation”—I must speak, God helping me, on another occasion.

One word in conclusion. Is there any one here whom the message of to-day depresses, instead of

cheers? Does this answer rise, almost unbidden, my brother, to your lips: "If only I could believe that God loves me, I could go out to my appointed work, in Parliament or elsewhere; I should not care how difficult, or how commonplace the work might be. I could do it in the Name of God, and for God, as part of the eternal plan which the Eternal God revealed. But I dare not. My sins have taken such hold upon me that I am not able to look up. I should be a hypocrite if I pretended to claim the power of God to help me. God knows, if man has never seen, what my life has really been; the thoughts, the words, the deeds, by day, by night"?

Dear brethren, do you not know that the very foundation of all CHRIST's ministry, alike to workers and to sufferers, is this: that He was given by the FATHER to be the one great Reconciler between God and man? Do you not know that God, in a mystery, "made Him to be sin for us Who knew no sin"? As truly as if you were in debt, and some one came to you and said, "I have paid thy debt," so, over and over again in the blessed Gospel does JESUS CHRIST address Himself to your human heart, saying, "I have paid thy debt: I was wounded for thy transgressions; I was bruised for thine iniquities: the chastisement of thy peace was laid on Me; by My stripes thou hast been healed. Come unto Me, with that load of guilt; I will give thee rest."

Oh, my brethren, instead of taking counsel with your own heart, and so, like the Psalmist, becoming every day more vexed and disquieted, and unable to grapple with the difficulties of life, open your lips to God. Pray that the HOLY SPIRIT may point you to the well-known texts, and apply them with power to your soul. Hear the comfortable words which thy Saviour CHRIST

saith unto all that truly turn to Him : "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Do not wait till you have shown enough sorrow for sin, till you have enough power in your prayers, till you have had time enough to test the reality of your repentance. Come unto Me, just as thou art ; come unto Me, and I will give—right royally, as a king gives, without money and without price—I will give thee rest. Come unto Me for the rest of forgiveness, that you may work for Me with the restfulness of power. Come unto Me, weary and heavy laden, and I—your CHRIST, Who died and rose again—will give you rest."

IV

REST FOR THE SUFFERERS

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—S. MATT. xi. 28.

LAST Sunday we considered these words, as applied to the workers ; to those whom GOD has bidden to labour, either with hand or head. We carry on the thought to-day in its application to the sufferers, to the heavy laden, to all who are in sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

Here again, let us be very careful not to narrow our LORD's invitation. All the troubles of body and heart and mind and spirit are included in these words : everything that depresses—the weather, poverty, failure, disappointment. There is not a phase in human life which is not liable to a secret trial ; and those who have the power of self-restraint know well that the hardest trials are those which we would not allow any human being to share. Everything, great and small, everything which commands human sympathy, and everything which is so commonplace that we should be despised if we were to acknowledge how it affected our happiness—all is known to our GOD and FATHER. And He sent His well-beloved SON to say, in His Name, to every human being who feels the burden of any trial, spiritual or temporal : "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." It is a distinct promise.

And how is this promise fulfilled ? Through the

agency of GOD the HOLY GHOST. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, in those wonderful chapters which record His last conversation with His disciples, brings forward perpetually this thought: that it would be by the personal comforting, the personal tender leading and guiding of the HOLY GHOST, that He would strengthen them amid all the troubles which were coming on them. Any one who studies carefully the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of S. John's Gospel, will see how our LORD refers all His work, with the human heart after His Ascension, to the personal leading and guiding of the HOLY GHOST. It is by the HOLY GHOST that He fulfils the promise.

This He does, first in ways that I may describe as more special. Sometimes, for instance, by the sight of a flower, the HOLY SPIRIT will bring to our minds the words of JESUS CHRIST about considering the flowers of the field. The sight of a sparrow has strengthened a boy, to my knowledge, through one of the hardest battles that a boy has to fight. He had been taught, when he saw the sparrows in a London square, to remember the words of our LORD JESUS CHRIST about our FATHER'S care for us.

Sometimes, again, when we are utterly crushed, He may fix our eyes, by the power of the HOLY GHOST, on a mother gathering her child in her arms, or a father leading his boy over some crowded crossing, and thus remind us of His care for us. Nothing is too small, too trifling, if, by means of it, He can comfort a little child, or cheer one of His poor suffering disciples. Or, again, many of you have known those hours in which we have come to church, feeling crushed; and as the word of Absolution was uttered, in the ordinary service of the Church, the whole weight has gone, and our heart has bounded upwards. We have knelt

perhaps at Holy Communion, almost afraid of irreverence in coming at all, on account of the utter dryness of spirit, the wandering thoughts, the perplexities that were inveigling us into sin, even at that solemn moment. And in the midst of it all, we know not how, after we have eaten that Bread and drunk that Wine, our soul has bounded up like a lark escaped out of its cage, has bounded up with joy to sing its carol of thanksgiving in the beautiful sunlight of God's reconciled countenance.

I look back on numberless instances in my own life and in the lives of those who are listening to me this morning, in which the LORD JESUS CHRIST, by the special working of His Spirit, through an Absolution, through a Communion, or through some of the commonplace trifles of the daily life, has fulfilled the promise of my text: "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

Our LORD does this also in a more general way, by the power of the same Spirit, working upon our mind or heart. This morning, I confine myself to the way in which He thus operates on our mind, so as to give it rest.

And here, we are not left to our own imagination. The New Testament gives us a distinct teaching on the subject, in the Book of the Revelation of S. John. Treasure it up, dear brethren, for dark hours that may come, perhaps, many years hence. Its value has been tested for eighteen centuries, by men and women in sorrow, need, sickness and other adversities.

Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, in the glory of His Ascension life, takes a man like unto ourselves, our "brother and companion in tribulation," and places him on a lonely island. And then, before He begins to instruct him, He says, in His tender compassion for you and for me, "Write these things"; let them be written in a book, that they may be handed on to each succeeding age of sufferers.

And how does our LORD give rest to the mind of S. John? He first teaches His Apostle that *there is a secret necessity for suffering*. He lifts up the veil, and explains to him, by a number of striking pictures, that there must be, for a certain time, war, famine, pestilence, death, perplexing events, triumph of evil; the devil apparently conquering; the world-power beguiling even GOD's own people; heresy, divisions, misery of every kind. He teaches him that all this does not come from GOD, but that it is, for a mysterious purpose which cannot be explained, permitted.

Now, do you see the force of all this? We conquer nature by obeying her. We can guide and direct, when we find out any of her laws. And so, when once it is understood that suffering is a condition of our humanity, every intelligent man will submit. "Amen! what I know not now, I shall understand afterwards." And in this, there is rest to the mind of man. I have tried it myself; and many others have tried it.

Then, our LORD teaches S. John this second principle: that *suffering is limited* by GOD. He does not leave His Apostle with what would be but a miserable kind of comfort. Over and over again in that Book of Revelation, you find the words: "It was given"—it was given to the world-power, apparently to triumph; it was given to the devil, to work misery, to send fiery darts of temptation, to make people doubt whether they were GOD's children or not. You see the principle:—suffering limited by GOD; GOD not allowing us to suffer beyond what we are able to bear; GOD watching over man, allowing Satan and the world apparently to crush him, but only up to a point—like a lion, but a lion chained.

And lastly, in that same book He reveals, as we said

last Sunday, the *ultimate triumph of good*. He teaches S. John that this suffering, though a necessity, is limited, not only in amount, but in length of endurance: in other words, that a day is coming—and may dawn to-morrow—when the thin veil shall be lifted up, and this dispensation of trial and disappointment shall be over, and the CHRIST shall appear. And then comes the glorious chorus of the end of the Revelation; the picture of the golden city where men neither hunger nor thirst any more; where CHRIST shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; where philosophers shall no longer be puzzled in their search after truth; a city where poor suffering men and women shall no longer be crowded together in the wretched degradation to which so many are now condemned.

The wretched dwellings of the poor! What must they appear to GOD? To see a city like this, with its abounding wealth, allowing its poor to live in places where almost every possibility of decency is taken from them; where the whole spirit is crushed, if it tries to rise up to heaven in prayer and praise, by the utterly unhealthy atmosphere in which they live! May GOD have mercy on a great country like Britain, allowing the poor—who represent CHRIST on earth—to live in this degradation!

Thank GOD, it is but for a time. There is an end coming. "They shall hunger no more." All those who are suffering should remember that the time is limited—"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; . . . for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

There are times, dear brethren, when it is better to speak to the mind than to the heart. I leave these

thoughts with you. I have tried to bring before you the Eternal GOD, revealing Himself in His SON JESUS CHRIST. I have tried to show you JESUS CHRIST, the same now as in the days of His earthly life, dealing with the mind of S. John ; saying to him, in other words, "Suffering is a necessity : when I was on earth, I also was obliged to submit to the law of suffering" : saying to him, secondly, "Nothing shall befall thee beyond what thou art able to bear ; the very hairs of thy head are numbered ; all is under the control of a Being of infinite power and wisdom and goodness" : saying to him, lastly, "It is but for an hour ; heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." And that morning may break long before the hour of death can approach to any of us !

Brace up your wills, my brothers, you that are young, you who know not yet the meaning of suffering and disappointment, of trial and difficulty. Treasure up these thoughts, for the time of need. Brace up your wills, my brothers and sisters, if you are in the fire to-day ; if to-day you are almost doubting whether indeed there is a God, so fiery have been the darts of evil that Satan has been allowed to discharge into your souls. Brace up your wills. Think of the thousands of men and women who have been braced to suffer even as you are suffering now, by hearing these comfortable words of our LORD JESUS CHRIST ! Think how my text has uplifted thousands out of the damp of the valley, into the light of the celestial hills !

One single instance, in conclusion. Fourteen hundred years ago men were in trouble, and CHRIST said to them these comfortable words ; and the man who was the prophet of his age thus expressed the confidence of that generation of believers in their LORD :—

“Fierce were the wild waves,
Dark was the night ;
Oars laboured heavily,
Foam glimmered white ;
Trembled the mariners,
Peril was nigh :
Then said the God of God,
‘Peace ! It is I !’

Ridge of the mountain wave,
Lower thy crest !
Wail of Euroclydon,
Be thou at rest ;
Peril can none be,
Sorrows must fly,
When saith the Lord of Light,
‘Peace ! It is I !’

JESU, Deliverer,
Come Thou to me !
Soothe Thou my voyaging
O’er life’s rough sea !
Then, when the storm of death
Roars sweeping by,
Whisper, O Truth of Truth,
‘Peace ! It is I !’”

Such was the response of one generation to the comfortable words, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

V

THE COMPASSION OF THE CHRIST

“Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude.”—S. MARK viii. 1, 2.

SO, my brethren, spake the CHRIST; so wrote the HOLY SPIRIT; short, simple words, “I have compassion”; pregnant with strength and with comfort for the toiling and heaving crowds of each succeeding age. There was nothing attractive then, even as there is nothing attractive now, in an Eastern crowd. The motive power of the miracle was the eternal love of God manifest in the flesh. JESUS, because He was the Saviour—JESUS, because He was GOD—“called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude.”

Observe how CHRIST takes the disciples into His confidence. Then, as now, He demanded with a tender urgency the sympathy of His people. “Surely the LORD GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.” That was the glorious promise of the Old Covenant. But the promise of the New Dispensation exceeds in glory: “I call you not servants,” said the CHRIST, “for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My FATHER I have made known unto you.”

In the invisible glory the LORD GOD is waiting till His Church on earth is stirred to face the burning questions at home on which her future depends ; till she is stirred to grapple with the great work of Foreign Missions ; till her eyes are opened to see—brighter than the glitter of any earthly amusement, however innocent ; grander than any scheme of self-culture, however elevated ; nobler than the crown of any earthly profession, however distinguished—the joy and glory of the man or the woman or the child who, with ungrudging hand, lays time and wealth and life at the feet of the world's Redeemer, and rises up, in harmony with the King, the King of kings and the LORD of lords, to accomplish the work for which His Blood was shed on Calvary.

Yes, my brethren, though the battle is raging on every side, though the triumph-song of the alien hosts is pealing from the city of our God, still the Captain of our salvation is waiting ; waiting there behind the veil, waiting in the royal tent. Though the very citadel of His kingdom may seem already in the hand of the foe, He is waiting. For without the co-operation of those who have been baptized into the holy army, and signed with the sign of the holy Cross, He will not bring out His power, to crush His adversaries and to establish His kingdom. Therefore it is that we see not yet all things put beneath His feet ; because He is waiting, till—by His Church's hand—the enemy has been subdued.

“JESUS called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat.” Observe the tender, condescending attention to detail ; hour by hour the little store gradually failing ; the perplexity creeping over them as to the future.

"They have nothing to eat ; they have been with Me three days ; I have compassion."

Very feeble is the faith ; very poor—oh, there is such comfort in that!—very poor is the response of those earth-bound disciples. "Whence can a man satisfy these men with bread, here in the wilderness?" Dry is the desert sand ; hard and rugged are the stony rocks ; cold and cheerless in the far-off distance are the snow-capped heights of Hermon : "Whence can a man satisfy these men with bread, here in the wilderness?"

Gently He strengthens their faith ; patiently the great Teacher develops their slowly-dawning intelligence. "He will not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax." He will not dispense with their help. He will not deprive them of the new teaching that they will gain from co-operating with His divine wisdom. He will not deny to Himself, in His great heart of love, the joy of their co-operation. "How many loaves have ye? Go and see!"

My brethren, very often have you and I read this old story of the feeding of the five thousand. To eyes that have been closed by the god of this world, how utterly wearying are the oft-read details ! And yet, for minds enlightened by the HOLY GHOST, what stores of instruction do they contain ! To hearts that are warmed with heavenly fire, how unspeakably tender is the echo of their every word !

On through all the long ages the pilgrim Church has been trying, however imperfectly, to follow in the steps of this JESUS of Nazareth, feeding the thousands in the desert. We say our grace before we eat our daily food, because JESUS our LORD "gave thanks." We feed the hungry, we seek the outcast, we strive to satisfy each empty soul, we show mercy even to the unthankful and to the evil, because He, our King, set

us an example ; because He gave us, by word and deed, the new commandment, "Love one another"—not according to the old standard of bygone days, but "as I have loved you." We consecrate the Bread at that holy table, because He blessed and brake it ; yea, brethren, rather ought I to say, because He Himself invisibly, but surely present, is now breaking the bread, is now blessing it, is now giving it into our hands, to set before the poor, broken-hearted, struggling, tempted children of Adam that throng the holy courts, Sunday after Sunday.

Yes, my brethren, amid all the perplexities of our nineteenth century entanglements, amid all the heritage of past neglect, and the burden of present unbelief, and the forecast of coming evil pressing down our souls ; amid all the sins and the sorrow, all the disturbing elements of a fallen humanity ; when even brave men are tempted to lie down, helpless and hopeless, like children that have lost their way in some lonely wood, with the wind roaring, and the rain pattering down upon the withered leaves ; when heart and flesh are failing, when the very life-blood seems dried up, and nothing seems left but the cold inanimate body that once was kindled with a living spirit ; amid all this despair, this utter hopelessness, in Church and State, this dread of touching the fabric, lest it crumble around us, we can lift up our hearts, "with angels and arch-angels, and with all the company of heaven." In the power of the endless life, we can see the gleams of light from that crystal sea ; we can hear (as truly as those crowds heard it in the wilderness) the voice of the Eternal, the Omniscient, the Unchangeable CHRIST, "I have compassion on the multitude ; come unto Me ; him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out ; tired in body, perplexed in mind, crushed in spirit, come

unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

To many of you, I know, such words as these can as yet have no meaning. There is something glorious in your position now. There is something grand in watching (as it were) the life-blood circling through your veins; in seeing you in all the freshness and brightness of early life. You do not yet know what is meant by a "desert place." You know nothing yet of the silver cord being loosed, and the golden bowl being broken. Life is bright and joyous to you, who hear nothing but the strains of its music, and find the whole pathway covered with flowers. Thank God for it! He would indeed be a churl who grudged you the happiness. Only, to you I speak as the wise man spoke in olden days: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; but remember that God shall bring thee into judgement."

I might speak to you of that solemn parable which the Church has so lately sounded in our ears. I might try to stir your souls by the thought of that sad prayer of the poor rich man: "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame."

Or I might tell you of the broken hearts that I so often see; of men who were once as young as you are; of women who had once your powers of fascination—to whom God had given the same gift of attractiveness, so that their every word, however unmeaning, had a power over those to whom they spoke. I could tell you of the deep sorrow which is felt by many who are now loving CHRIST, who have now come to Him, and have yielded themselves absolutely to Him, and have found His blessed forgiveness, but look back (oh, so drearily!) over wasted nights, misused opportunities—that mag-

nificent gift of life, and strength, and youth, all spent on self!

But I cannot thus appeal to you—by selfish motives! I have confidence in the nobler instincts of the nature once created in the image of God; and to you who are young—to you for whom this parable has no meaning as yet—I appeal by those nobler instincts. Your CHRIST has given you that influence; your LORD has given you that power of laying hold of others, that grand possession—natural life. Do you not yet understand that He has need of you; that you have a work to do, now, which you cannot do when the golden bowl is being broken, and the silver cord is being loosed? By the memory of what was said to you at your Confirmation, by the prayers that were then pleaded before the Throne of God in heaven, I beseech you, disappoint not the CHRIST! He has compassion on you. It is pitiable, even to a man (much more to the loving CHRIST) to see you, with that magnificent possession, spending it—perhaps not wickedly, but—on a world that passeth away!

And as for you, dear brethren, who need no explanation of the parable—you who know what it is to be unsatisfied, you who know what it is to feel the sore burden of sin—what shall I say to you? CHRIST lives. Do not perplex yourselves with mysteries, instead of starting at the bottom of the ladder. God has given proof enough for your mind, that, as a matter of mere history, JESUS CHRIST once lived on this earth. And you can satisfy yourselves, if you study the evidence, that this JESUS CHRIST was GOD. Begin with that; do not work from the circumference to the centre, but from the living, central Truth of all, from the CHRIST Who “liveth and was dead,” and is “alive for evermore”; “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.”

It was not a mere passing emotion by which the heart of JESUS was stirred in that desert place. You find the same compassion, all through His life on earth. In the forty days after His Resurrection you find it still the same. "Peace be to you. Why are ye troubled? Why do thoughts [perplexities] arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet; it is I Myself."

He is "the same" in the Acts of the Apostles. When S. Paul was in great perplexity the LORD stood by him and strengthened him. When heart and flesh were failing even a supernatural vision was vouchsafed, that the CHRIST Who had compassion upon him might say unto him, "Fear not, Paul; be not afraid, but speak, for I am with thee."

Do you feel, my brethren, that if only you were good—if only you had done right all your life, if only you had loved GOD as you ought to have loved Him—that then you could look up to JESUS CHRIST, and ask Him to have compassion upon you? My brethren, do read your Bible, if it be but this Sunday afternoon! Leave the mere wandering from house to house, however harmless it may be. Read a little of what JESUS said, in any of the Gospels; and then walk out, and quietly think about it. Then come back, and read a little more. Oh, the wonderful light that breaks in upon the heart, as we sit quietly in the lonely room, with that blessed Evangel of JESUS of Nazareth!

My brethren, do you understand this: that when CHRIST died on the Cross, it was GOD and Man Who was there; and that all your life was known to Him, even then? What has surprised you in your failures does not surprise Him. What weighs down your spirit has weighed on the Spirit of JESUS of Nazareth all through the long ages. He has borne your griefs and carried your sorrows; from the beginning your sins were all

present to Him. And now He sends to you, by me, a glorious message ! You have nothing to do first ; you cannot undo the past ; you cannot wash it out. But He says, " I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins : return unto Me ; for I have redeemed thee." " Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved."

Brothers, will you not ask the CHRIST to-day to help you to believe in Him ? Will you not take the words of the old Gospels, and kneel down and say, " JESUS, my LORD, Thou didst open the eyes of the blind man ; open my eyes ? Thou didst say, ' I will have mercy ' ; have mercy on me." Take in this way the words of the poor suppliants in the Gospels. And then take the words that JESUS spoke in answer, and use them like arrows to send back again into His own heart of love. Plead with Him, by His love to the blind, and the deaf, and the dumb, and the lame, and the poor sinners, and the wandering disciples, and the outcast ones. Plead with Him, by the revelation of His Gospel for the lost. Remind Him how He said, that if a man had a hundred sheep, and one of them had gone astray, he would forget, for the time, the ninety and nine to go after the one that had wandered astray.

To you who once were called to the highest life, and have been wandering away to the world all these months of the London season—to you who once were bidden to live the life of angels, and have sunk down into sins that cannot be mentioned—whatever the past, whatever the burden, in the Name of my CHRIST I speak to you. " JESUS called His disciples unto Him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude." And JESUS CHRIST is " the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever " !

VI

THE SMOKING FLAX

"A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench."—ISA. xlii. 3.

I DO not intend, brethren, to-night, to speak to you of the context in which these words are found. It is full of subjects for thought, but to-night we must be content with the simple words of the text. We know that these words apply to our Blessed LORD, for they are quoted as referring to Him in one of the Gospels. (*S. Matt. xii. 15-20.*)

Let us try to gather up the thoughts contained in these two images. They are slightly different, but one thought underlies them both. The one refers chiefly to GOD, the other to man.

The idea of the first is taken from one of the shepherds' pipes—one of those little musical pipes—crushed and trampled under foot. You can imagine how useless it is, in its crushed state, filled with mud. An impatient musician would cast it aside, and substitute another; but the sweet Psalmist of Israel—the Good Shepherd—takes it up. Tenderly He deals with it till He has again evoked the sweet harmonies of heaven.

The other picture is taken from the lamp in the Temple, burning feebly and dimly, giving forth black smoke rather than light. Here, again, the impatient minister of the Temple would cast aside that useless

lamp. But the great High Priest has gentler and tenderer thoughts. With a sharp needle, it may be, He trims the wick, nurses the flickering flame, till, at last, the whole Temple is irradiated with light, to the glory of the High Priest Who kindled it.

Any one familiar with the Bible will see the application of these images.

1. The "bruised reed." A soul just beginning the conscious Christian life, sore beset with difficulties, unable as yet to send out the harmony of praise and thanksgiving, unable to send up one real prayer.

2. The "smoking flax." Here we see the poor timid soul just beginning to wish to be of use, to let its light shine before men ; sorry for a wasted life, longing to be of use, longing to be able to tell of the love of CHRIST, but timid ; not able to speak so that others, seeing its good works and hearing its good words, may glorify the FATHER in heaven. It is a picture of the timid, unsatisfactory Christian—unsatisfactory to GOD, unsatisfactory to man. Men, as a rule—clergymen, as a rule—would cast aside such a one, and interest themselves in some more promising case. But CHRIST has a personal, individual care for every such soul. He cares for you, poor mother of a family ; you who are finding it so hard to pray, you who are so weighed down with anxieties. He cares for you, poor man, toiling day by day for your bread. He cares for you, young girl, tied down as you are by vanity, finding it so hard to cut the cords which have so long bound you to the world. For each of you JESUS CHRIST has a personal, individual love.

The thought which the HOLY GHOST wants to fix upon our minds is this : the tender love of our LORD ; the way in which He keeps back His power ; leading us on so tenderly ; allowing the tares to stay among the wheat, lest one ear of wheat should be plucked up with

them ; His forbearance with those who are in many respects so unsatisfactory !

But oh, brethren, if I were to give you illustrations of this love the work would be endless. His dealings with the Apostles, and His patience with their slowness to understand, their unbelief and hardness of heart—this is a subject more appropriate to Saints' Days.

1. The woman of Samaria. What an instance ! She was a hard, argumentative, uninteresting character ! Yet He humbles Himself to ask a favour of her ; He puts Himself at her feet. "Give Me to drink." Then He gently takes that "bruised reed," which had been tossed aside by man. He deals with it as He alone is able to deal with it, until He has brought out music at last ; until, the lamp replenished, its light begins to shine before men, and others hear her witness for her Saviour.

2. Again, that woman in Simon's house. A woman so degraded that even JESUS CHRIST was remarked upon for letting her come near ! Yet how gently did He deal with her until the words could be spoken, "Go in peace !"

3. But more striking still is the story of Zacchæus ! It is difficult for us now to understand the position of those publicans. The Romans had conquered the country, and instead of collecting the taxes themselves they appointed tax-gatherers from among the Jews, and allowed them to make what profit they could out of it. You can imagine what a temptation to extortion ! All that they could extort from the people above the legal tax went into their own pockets, so they tried to drag out the last farthing.

But more than this. The Israelites, proud as ever, hated what reminded them of a foreign tyranny. We can imagine what it would be among ourselves ; how

we should hate the sight of the men who were thus hired to make money out of us. So the publicans were hated, alike for their injustice and because of national pride. Despised by all, they lost their own self-respect; they became what they were supposed to be, and lived without love to God or to man. If they went even to the Temple the Pharisees gathered up their long robes, and thanked God they were not like them! If they went into the house with Jesus He was called "the Friend of publicans and sinners." But Jesus saw, behind one of those hard faces, a very broken heart; and He saw an opportunity of mending that "bruised reed." He was near Jerusalem, followed by multitudes; and in the presence of thousands who hated those publicans He said, "Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house."

Our LORD was then at the height of His popularity, and He used His popularity, as great and good men will ever use it, for God. He humbled Himself to receive a favour from Zacchæus. He trusted Zacchæus; He believed in the power of truth over Zacchæus; He dealt with him as a man who wished to be better. And Zacchæus "made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully"; and said, "Behold, LORD, the half of my goods I give to the poor."

Whatever interpretation you put upon those words, whether, for the first time, he told any human being that he wished to be better: for when people feel crushed they will not say that they wish to be better; whether you look on the words of Zacchæus as a testimony to his confidence and love towards our LORD, "LORD, nobody knew it, but I have been giving half of my goods to the poor," etc.; or whether you say the heart of Zacchæus melted at the Presence of the LORD, and he confessed, "LORD, I have done

wrong, I have been a cheat, but from this day I will make a new start; and I will pay back, fourfold, whatever I have gained unjustly"; whichever way you take it, that man heard the words spoken by JESUS, "This day is salvation come to this house."

These are instances which must suffice for to-day, of "bruised reeds" which had been tossed aside by man, those of whom man had said, "You will never make anything good out of them." Yet the LORD JESUS CHRIST brought out the harmony of GOD from those "bruised reeds," and kindled the "smoking flax" to the full light of the eternal Kingdom. Thank GOD! for these are words which some of you specially need. Lift up your hearts, that the HOLY SPIRIT may help me to put it so as it will go to the hearts of those who need it.

1. Does it not strike you that there is something awful about it, this thought of the power of GOD restrained, kept back? There are souls that will at last reject all GOD's love, will go on resisting till they die; yet CHRIST keeps back His power! He does not manifest His power as a King—"He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets." He allows His message to be despised and rejected! He comes to us, with power kept back! "Where is the promise of His coming?" men say. They think that GOD is weak, and GOD seems to say, "I am content that you should think Me weak, rather than that I should break the 'bruised reed,' or quench the 'smoking flax.'" I see a man whose heart GOD has stirred rejecting these better impulses; yet GOD is patient, calm. When I read in my Bible that GOD is Almighty, and yet I see that His power is not manifested in this dispensation; that He is patient, long-suffering to us-ward, lest the "smoking flax" should

be quenched, it gives me an awful idea of the Majesty of GOD. I see men and women keeping CHRIST standing at the door. Their child dies; the blinds are drawn down, and still the Saviour stands outside the long-closed door! And then some dear friend is taken, some one who was as a brother, and again the same voice speaks; again I see the Saviour standing there, and still the door is closed! And when we think Who it is—GOD, Who could destroy that man with a word, yet “despised and rejected”—going forth, as it were, so humbly, with that long funeral procession, to whisper if only a word to one of the mourners; then, in awe, we say, “O GOD, have mercy on that man. He is fighting against GOD. He is presuming on GOD’s self-restrained power!”

2. But the special thought is this, His tender love. Some of you are preparing for Confirmation, or beginning to pray, or beginning to speak to your clergyman. You are trying to pray, and you find it difficult; you find that you cannot pray; you feel like infants crying in the night. All of us who now realize His love have felt this; all of us have been tempted to say, “I am too careless; it is too late for me; there is no hope for me; I should be a hypocrite if I tried to return to CHRIST.” My brother, you are the very man whom JESUS CHRIST is thinking of, whom He is caring for most, in this congregation: the one sheep for whose sake He leaves the ninety and nine in the wilderness. What else is the meaning of the “bruised reed,” of the “smoking flax” but what you are feeling?

Oh, my brother, there is such a blessing waiting for you to-night—for you that are saying in your heart, “I do want to be better; I do want to be on CHRIST’s side in the great battle.” The LORD JESUS CHRIST has such love for you! There is such mercy for you!

Rejoice, even while all seems dark still. It is but the same darkness through which all of us have had to pass; only the devil will try to dishearten you in the darkness. Your lot is the brightest among us all to-night. You are "not far from the Kingdom of God." Take the text and think it over to-night when you go home. Pray over it to-night. Thank God that it is true, that it is written in the Old Testament and in the New Testament: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away"; "The Word of the LORD endureth for ever." And this is the Word which God hath spoken of His SON: "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench."

VII

EARTH-BOUND SOULS

"Who mind earthly things."

PHIL. iii. 19.

THESE words, my brethren, seem to gather a deep significance when we weigh carefully two considerations: first, when we reflect upon the character of the person by whom they were written, and the circumstances under which they were written; and, secondly, when we read them in connection with the clauses by which they are surrounded.

1. First, then, let us consider for a moment the character of the Apostle S. Paul. If there is one thought more than another that fastens upon the mind of any intelligent student of Holy Scripture, it is the grandeur of that lonely life. If ever there was a man who stood out against the world, brave, calm, undaunted, it was the great Apostle of the Gentiles. And yet, this strong man is not ashamed to tell us that he wrote these words, with the tears falling from his eyes: "I tell you, even weeping, they mind earthly things." The Apostle felt—for he was a true man, and there is nothing really human in pretending to be Stoical—he felt the vicissitudes of his lot, the sorrows which were pressing upon him at the time that these words were spoken. He shrank, with all the intensity of that refinement by which he was characterized, from the continual presence, by day and by night, of a Roman

soldier. It cost him more than words could express, not to be able even to lift his hand without feeling the clinking of the chain by which he was tied, hour after hour, to that stern representative of the Roman authority. We know what the man felt, for his biographer has told us that when he landed on that lonely Italian shore, he was so depressed in spirit that the mere greeting of a few Christian people who met him on his road gladdened his heart, and enabled him to thank God, and to take courage. Yes, the Apostle knew what it was to feel the bitter trials that God had laid on him, but he kept the tears for the privacy of his own heart: for the hours of communion with his God. When he wrote or spoke as the prophet of the Most Highest, no tears were allowed to fall, to blot the page on which the Word of the Living God was to be inscribed. No, my brethren, it was not for himself that the Apostle shed tears. It was because, as he looked round on the world—yea, when he looked into the hearts of his own people—he found them “minding earthly things.”

2. And, secondly, the words derive intense significance, when they are read in connection with the section of the Epistle. It is comparatively unimportant whether the Apostle had in his mind in the earlier clauses of the chapter that sect which was even then rising into some importance, the forefathers of those who in every age have done far more harm to Christianity than was ever wrought by its avowed opponents—those who profess to “read their title clear to mansions in the skies,” who profess to rejoice in the liberty of the Gospel and the power of the Precious Blood, who profess to be ever pressing heavenward, and despise the ordinary Christians by whom they are surrounded, and yet neglect the plain, common duties of morality ;

are not afraid to spread discord among brethren, slander their neighbours, ill-treat their servants, cheat their customers, adulterate their goods, neglect their plain duty to their neighbour which they were taught (or ought to have been taught) as children, in the old Church Catechism. Whether that wretched sect was now in the Apostle's mind, or whether it is more the general description of the people whom he saw on every side, matters not. No one can read the earlier verses without instinctively shrinking with abhorrence from the characters therein described. "Enemies of the Cross of CHRIST!" Well might the Apostle weep over them! "Whose end is destruction"; for whom no holy city shall ever open its golden gates; who shall hear naught hereafter but the dismal wail of remorse wafted to their ears in that dark shadow-land. Well might the Apostle weep for them! "Whose god is their belly"; who live to eat; who worship their appetites. Well might the Apostle mourn over such a degradation of humanity! "Whose glory is in their shame!"

Then comes the conclusion; by a strange (I might almost call it) grammatical mistake, the Apostle seems to catch up the sentence, and—by the peculiar way in which he expresses it in the original Greek—seems to tell us that these words point out the fountain-spring of all the defiling streams which he had been previously describing: "they mind earthly things."

"They mind earthly things." What does he mean, my brethren? It is most important that this should be clearly understood. Let us see, first, what the Apostle evidently (if we compare the passage with other parts of Scripture) does not mean.

1. Obviously, he does not mean to hold out here the slightest encouragement to neglecting the plain obvious duties of everyday life. If there be one thought that

runs more clearly through the Bible than another—which is pressed upon us in general language, and then applied in detail to the duties of masters and servants, husbands and wives, fathers and children—it is this: Whatever GOD has given into your hands to do, be it great or trivial, “do it heartily, as to the LORD.” Follow the example of that Greek sculptor, who, when he was asked why he took such care with the part of a statue which would be against the wall and visible to no one, replied with a magnificent dignity, worthy of any Christian, “The gods will see it.”

2. Still less, my brethren, does the Apostle wish here to cast the slightest discredit on the full development of those natural feelings which GOD has given to us as a part of our heritage. Those theories of so-called detachment which are current in modern days are but a caricature of the great text: “If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” Of course, we are to love those whom GOD has given us to love, as the Bible says, “in the LORD”: taking them from the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and giving them back to Him when He wills. Of course, we are not to love them above CHRIST, or to put their will above the Will of the LORD GOD, to Whom our life is devoted. But there is not a shadow of ground, from the beginning to the end of the Bible, for any theory that we become more GOD-like or more acceptable to our FATHER in heaven, by undervaluing the natural relationships of which He Himself is the Author. We are to love with all the intensity of our nature, provided only we love in the LORD. That cannot be the meaning of “minding earthly things.”

3. Further (and this is very important, especially for earnest people to consider), it does not mean, that so

long as we are living upon earth we can obtain an immunity from temptation. So long as we have to fight the battle, burdened with this corruptible body, we are liable to the assaults of the world, and the flesh, and the devil. Unless we are strangely uplifted for the moment by some divine enthusiasm, or have sunk beneath the level of humanity, into the condition of idiots, we shall be affected by the varying circumstances of everyday life. If a man's money goes, he will be anxious about it; if his fortune is hanging in the balance, he will be ill at ease.

Nay, further. We may have prepared for the approach to the mercy-seat of God with the most scrupulous care; and yet, at the very moment when the Bible is open before us, when we are trying in the privacy of our own chamber to have communion with our God: nay, at that most solemn moment of our life, when we kneel at that holy table, and are receiving into our souls the Body and Blood of JESUS, as our lips are touching the Bread and the Wine: even then, if God so will (to humble us, and to prove us, and to empty us of self, that we may be filled afterwards with a greater measure of the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT), we may be distracted by the most terrible imaginings; or, still more likely, we may be tossed hither and thither by anxieties for ourselves, for our children, for our work, for the most ordinary mundane events of this lower earth.

Well then, dear brethren, what does the Apostle mean? We all try to avoid this question; and yet it is very easily answered, if we are honest. We never find any difficulty in answering it for other people. We understand what is meant by saying that a boy's mind is really set upon his work. He may enjoy the cricket, the boating, the riding, whatever it may be; but he has

set his mind upon rising to the top of his class. We all know what it means. He gives himself up to that ; he subordinates his whole life, with all its fears and hopes and anxieties and friendships, to that one absorbing idea. And so in ordinary adult life. We never have any difficulty in discovering what any person has set his mind upon. We say, "He has determined to be popular ; he has made up his mind to amass a fortune ; he is resolved that he will be first in his profession" ; or, "That woman has set her heart on getting into society." For this she will toil for years, season after season. For this, she will condescend, it may be, to the most degrading artifices. For this, she perseveres ; her heart is set upon it. She is not always talking about it ; but that is the fixed object of her desire ; she may be doing a thousand other things, but that is the one underlying motive of her life. She minds it. She has set her heart on it. And this is precisely what the Apostle means, in the text. He describes that state in which a person resolves to live for this visible world, and not for the invisible kingdom by which he is surrounded.

We live, as it were, in the midst of two kingdoms. There is the kingdom that we can see, and the kingdom that we cannot see. And the great principle that runs through chapters xi. and xii. of the Epistle to the Hebrews—the great principle which united together the glorious company of the martyrs and saints and confessors—is this : They walked by faith, and not by sight. They "endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible." They set their mind upon that which they could not see, instead of upon the things which were visible and patent to their ordinary observation. If you run through the history of all those servants of God during the eighteen hundred years of the Church's

history, whom we commemorated on All Saints' Day, down to the last that you yourselves have known, you will see that their outward lives were as different as could possibly be imagined. Some were married, some were single ; some were rich, some were poor ; some were wise, some were ignorant. But they were all agreed in this, they walked by faith, not by sight. In the earlier verses of the chapter from which my text is taken, the great Apostle sums up his life, and theirs also, in these simple words, "Brethren, this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS."

This, my brethren, was the life of the saints ; and to "mind earthly things" is just the opposite to this. There is an infinite variety in the developments of the underlying principle, but the principle is the same. They live gross and degraded lives, it may be ; or they are refined and intelligent. They do nothing wrong, i.e., nothing that the world can reprove ; they are intensely beloved, and rightly beloved, by their family, by their friends, by all who come in contact with them. They are naturally amiable, ready to help any one ; but, they have dropped their anchor in the quiet sea ; they are satisfied with the things that they can see with their human eyes, and touch with their human hands. They are content to listen to the evening breeze, and to watch the gentle ripple of the waters. When God makes the storm rise and the waves break over their vessel, for a time they are tossed hither and thither ; but, as quickly as possible, they get rid of the trouble ; they bury themselves again in their work ; they occupy their mind in any way to distract their thoughts, so as to get back again into the state of calm, quiet repose, in which

they can begin afresh to "mind earthly things." It is no matter what the earthly thing may be—it may be preaching, celebrating Holy Communion, going about a round of pastoral duties ; or managing a ship, speaking in Parliament : anything you like—if the motive limit us to time and sense, we are "minding earthly things."

My brethren, the subject is so important that I must continue it on another occasion, God helping me. I would leave it now for your own consideration.

Take the Bible for your guide, and form some idea of the occupation of the saints and the blessed ones in the invisible Kingdom. Take the description that the Bible gives you of the life that you would have to live, if you died to-day, and God took you in a moment straight over death and over Paradise, into heaven. If JESUS CHRIST were to take you straight into heaven, what would you find to do ? Take the ordinary life of hundreds who "mind earthly things." What would they find to do in heaven ?

My brethren, there is no difficulty in answering the question for ourselves, whether our affections are set on the heavenly Kingdom, or on earthly things. Take our money : what part goes to God ; what part to self and the world ? Take our time : what proportion of it does God receive ? Take the body and the soul : what provision do we make for feeding the body ? What care do we take to come frequently to the Table of our LORD, to be fed with Living Bread, so that the soul may be strengthened ? The test is so simple ! But it is awfully solemn.

Remember how the sermon began. It required a strong feeling to make the Apostle Paul shed tears. It is a wretched companionship for eternity, the society of poor creatures who worship their lower appetites,

who glory in their shame, who are enemies of the Cross of CHRIST. And yet, not merely did the Apostle write it, not merely did he shed tears as the words were inscribed by his amanuensis, but GOD and the HOLY GHOST, deliberately recorded the words, for the warning and instruction of the Church in every age. He deliberately willed that there should be kept for all succeeding ages the record of the Apostle's tears, and of the companionship reserved for you and for myself, if, in the day of our LORD's appearing, we are found to have set our minds on "earthly things."

Oh, brethren, let us pray, preacher and people, to Almighty GOD, "Search me, O GOD, and examine my heart; prove me, and see if this earthly-mindedness is in me; that I may be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and brought out into the glorious liberty of the children of GOD. Amen."

VIII

FORMALISM

"Woe unto you, scribes !"

S. MATT. xxiii. 25.

THE chapter from which the text is taken is full of very startling words—startling when we remember by Whom they were spoken—still more startling when we remember to whom they were addressed.

They were uttered by One Who never broke the bruised reed or quenched the smoking flax, Whose tenderness no human words can ever express, Whose boundless love was proved by the death-agony of Gethsemane and the blood-shedding of Calvary.

They were addressed to the leaders of the so-called religious world—the Pharisees—who sat in Moses' seat : the great authorities upon every question which concerned the worship of Jehovah.

In all outward observance their punctuality was remarked and admired. None more scrupulous than they in the attendance at public worship. None more exact than they in paying every tax by which the expenses of the sanctuary were to be defrayed, or its ministers supported. Their almsgiving was proverbial ; their liberality unquestioned. The uppermost rooms at feasts and greetings in the public thoroughfares were only a part of the homage which was paid by all to their high character and undoubted respectability.

Imagine, then, the dismay of a member of this class when he approached the meek and lowly Saviour, prepared to accept from Him the honour to which he had been for so many years accustomed. Imagine his dismay as, in the presence of the crowd on whose flattery his very existence depended, he was suddenly addressed in words of withering scorn as a serpent, a viper, a hypocrite—"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" "Ye fools and blind, ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" What is the explanation, then, of this unwonted severity of our Blessed LORD?

Why was the whole tone of His ordinary addresses so entirely altered? The answer is given in the words of the text. In that solemn sentence the verdict of God Almighty is recorded upon the whole race of Pharisees—"Ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter." Oh, awful sarcasm: the outside and nothing else. The heart of these professors was not right with God. They responded to the calls of public charity, but no true love for God and men reigned in their souls. With reverent mien they said their prayers and then went home to indulge some secret sin, to ruin a troublesome rival, or crush a helpless servant, or quietly to rob an orphan child of its inheritance. They unfurled to every breeze the banner of Jehovah that the crowd might admire their loyalty, but in the hidden chambers of their inmost being were concealed the whole of Satan's outlawed band—selfishness, and coveteousness, and worldliness, and impurity.

From this hypocrisy our LORD revolted with the united strength of His human and divine nature. He loathed, as any noble-spirited man would have loathed, such miserable unreality, and yet pitied those wretched creatures tottering on the very brink of eternal

perdition. He made one last effort to save them from themselves, to reveal the truth to their blinded hearts, to snatch them back from the abyss which was already opening to receive them. And if this failed—if the outstretched arm availed not to rescue, at least He would hinder others from following in their steps—at least He would unfold to His own people the true character of their self-elected leaders lest they, too, should be involved in the like destruction. So, speaking as One that had authority and casting aside for a time the gentleness of the Redeemer, He uttered His awful denunciation: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Ye blind guides! Ye fools, ye hypocrites! Ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.”

Now there arises a further inquiry. How was it that these Pharisees could descend to such depths of iniquity? Surely it was right to make clean the exterior, surely they were bound to live the decorous, moral life in which they gloried? How, then, did it come to pass that the very anxiety to make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter was turned by the great enemy of souls to their destruction, and that which should have been for their health became unto them an occasion of falling?

I will endeavour to answer this inquiry, and it is to this division that I would request your special attention, because upon it will be based the concluding and more practical remarks.

There was, no doubt, a time in the lives of these Pharisees when they were conscious of heavenly aspirations—a blessed spring-tide of the soul when refreshing showers descended from on high to quicken the good seed which had been sown in their hearts. In those days they were able to appreciate the beauty

of holiness. In those early years they would have echoed the cry of the ancient seer, "May I die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his." They shrank, however, from the sacrifices by which real holiness could be attained. They held back from the free surrender of their heart to God. They were afraid of the answer which might be returned if they inquired of their FATHER in heaven, "LORD, what wilt Thou have me to do?" So Satan took advantage of their indecision, and suggested an easier method by which the favour of heaven could be attained.

Under the guidance of this master-teacher of deceit they renounced the rugged pathway of inward self-denial, and turned into the smoother road of external obedience.

Instead of uttering the prayer of the Psalmist whom they professed to admire, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," they concentrated all their attention upon the outward acts which were required by the standard of the age in which they lived. From that point their downfall was rapid. Their conscience, thus tampered with, soon began to utter deceitful whispers. That which was given to be the light of their souls became darkness, and, verily, the darkness was a darkness which could be felt. In proportion as they received the praise of men for their outward goodness they relaxed their efforts after inward purity.

Where the publican would have been startled by the scoff of the world whose feelings he had outraged, the breast of the Pharisee was only stirred by self-complacent pride as he listened to the flatterers by whom he was surrounded. Then came the end—the end of utter unmitigated hypocrisy.

The old phrases were still on their lips. The old forms were still observed. But the spirit which giveth life was gone. They had a name to live, but in the sight of heaven they were dead. Just as in some foreign capital the crown and the sword of a giant king are preserved, though for centuries no head has been found large enough to wear the crown, no hand of strength sufficient to wield the sword, so was it with those poor Pharisees. In the thronged street, the crown of righteousness was borne before them, and men cried "Rabbi, Rabbi"—but theirs were not the heads on which its jewels were first intended to sparkle, they were not the god-like heroes for whom its massive rolls had been moulded.

On their foreheads and on the folds of each gorgeous robe might be observed the texts of Scripture ostentatiously displayed, but their puny hands were powerless to wield that sword of the Spirit, their feeble wills were impotent to wage a god-like warfare against man's triple foe—the world, the flesh, the devil. In this alone had they succeeded—that they had made clean the outside of the cup and of the platter.

Brethren, he who tempted the Pharisees is still near to tempt, and, unless we take good heed, to destroy each one of us.

I do not, indeed, imagine—God forbid that it should be so—that any here present has sunk to those depths of degradation which had been reached by these miserable hypocrites. I would rather ask you to stand by their side at an earlier stage in their downward career and inquire whether we have entered upon that road which leads to the ruin in which they were involved.

Now, the temptation of compounding for inward sin by correctness of outward conduct will press most heavily upon those who, without any real change of heart, have come to be considered as religious. In a

time of much spiritual earnestness, at a mission, at their Confirmation, after some great sorrow, they have felt the power of God, and now they are regarded by their family, their friends, their clergyman, as active, earnest Churchmen or real Gospel Christians, large-hearted evangelical Churchmen, or whatever may be the phrase which expresses the approval of the society in which they live. They feel in their own consciences that all is not right with God. They have great doubts whether they are really religious, whether they are ready to die and appear before the judgement-seat of CHRIST. Yet they shrink from so humbling themselves as to acknowledge the false foundation on which their spiritual fabric has been raised. Their character for godliness is too precious a possession to be lightly abandoned. So, instead of falling down on their knees and praying God Almighty to create in them a clean heart and renew a right spirit within them, they direct all their efforts to preserving the appearance of goodness, are mere miserable counterfeits, so the process goes on very easily and very surely under the crafty guidance of the master spirit of deceit. Conscience is soothed, the still small voice is silenced, and unless the Spirit of God arrest their downward course they become at last like whited sepulchres—all is well on the outside ; they are fair and spotless in the eye of man. Sunday school teachers, it may be, clergymen, upright men of business, respected and respectable, the backbone of their country for honesty and straightforwardness. But within there is no love for God, no warmth of self-sacrifice, no sorrow for sin, no enthusiasm for their LORD, no growing religious life—only the cold chill of death, the second death—the death of the soul ! But why need I single out one class alone ? Which of us is equally anxious about the opinion of God, and that which may be formed by those amongst whom we live ?

Which of us is struggling with equal care against the sins which only GOD condemns and those which would draw down upon us the contempt of our fellow-men? Which of us can say that our prayers for grace to subdue our habits of exaggeration—our vanity, our nasty temper, our unruly tongue, our pride, our love of money, our indolence, our distrust, our want of charity—are uttered with the same earnestness or repeated with the same perseverance as we should manifest if drunkenness or dishonesty or any other of the sins which man condemns were the evils from which we were imploring the Almighty to deliver us? If this be so, then, beloved in CHRIST, what else are we doing but following in the steps of the Pharisee, bending down with scrupulous attention to make clean the outside, but forgetting the Word of the LORD our GOD, “Thou fool, cleanse first that which is within”?

Let us take warning, then, by the sad history which we have this day considered. Let these solemn denunciations of JESUS of Nazareth strike terror into our souls as with a lightning flash they reveal to us the abyss into which we, unknown to ourselves, also may be advancing.

This day let us humble ourselves at His feet Who died to save us. There where none ever kneel in vain let us lay the heavy burden of the past. Let us tell to Him Who has borne all our sins on the Cross the long sad tale of our wretched unreality.

“LORD,” so let us pray, “I have been counted a real Christian, and yet my tongue has again and again been defiled with untrue and unloving words. I have been considered all my life as a brave man, and yet in my heart I have been a miserable coward, afraid to speak for the LORD Who died for me. I have been proud of my high character, my unblemished name, my Christian

reputation, and yet in Thy sight all my life long I have been breaking the first of all the commandments, 'Thou shalt love the LORD thy God and thy neighbour as thyself.' I never loved Thee. I loved my money, my pleasure, my honourable reputation, but never loved my God. I have not loved my neighbour—I have been hard and uncharitable in my judgement of my poor fellow-sinners—God be merciful to me the sinner."

Yes, dear brethren, each one for himself and herself, let us pour it into the all-loving ear of Him Who is so ready even at the eleventh hour to receive and bless us ; then, in the strength of His free pardon, let us arise to a nobler and more CHRIST-like life.

Henceforth let us look at our life not in the mirror of the world in which we live, but in the clear light of God's unerring Word. Vain is the opinion of man and vain its soothing subtleness. The eye of the All-seeing is on us. The day is at hand when every secret thought shall be disclosed. Thank God if we are respectable and honest and upright and beloved by those whose love we prize, but the day is at hand when we must face Him from Whom no hidden corner of the heart can be concealed. One is gone, another is even now passing away. Our time is not far distant. O God, in mercy create in us a clean heart, renew a right spirit within us.

Brethren, pray the LORD by His Agony and bloody sweat, His Cross and Passion, that the sentence of Holy Scripture may never be passed on any of us: "He loved darkness rather than light." "Bind him hand and foot and cast him out into the outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Pray God that these words of withering scorn may never be addressed to us : "Poor self-deceiver, thou didst well unto thyself, and all men spoke well of thee. Thou hast spent thy life in making clean the outside of the cup and of the platter."

IX

MIGHTY TO SAVE

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."—ISA. lxiii. 1.

HOW is this free salvation to be appropriated, so that it shall have a practical influence on our hearts and lives? How are we to lay hold of it individually?

Let us turn to God's revealed Word, and not to human books. It is perfectly simple.

1. Grasp the meaning of your Baptism. Leaving out of sight, to-day, the state of the heathen, let us try to realize our own position in God's sight.

GOD Almighty applied this free salvation to each of us at our Baptism. If you take a concordance and look out the passages headed "Baptism," etc., you will have no doubt about it. I never knew it fully myself, till I had done this, and seen what God's teaching really is, on the subject. At our Baptism God linked us with the LORD JESUS CHRIST. He baptized us into CHRIST. By that act of His free grace He placed us, one by one, before we had done anything to deserve His love, in a position immeasurably higher than that which was occupied by the greatest of those who lived before the founding of His Kingdom. "There hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he

that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." -

The Jew, indeed, at certain times, and in certain ways, could be sure of his sins being forgiven: but the sacrifices had again and again to be offered for their expiation. Those who went to our LORD in the days of His earthly ministry received from time to time the blessed assurance, "Thy sins are forgiven." But we are placed on a higher platform. We have been baptized into CHRIST, in Whom we have "the remission of sins." Even so early in life as Confirmation the Bishop thanks GOD that He *has* given to these, His servants, forgiveness of all their sins. The very essence of the New Covenant is this: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

GOD chose you: He elected you into JESUS CHRIST at your Baptism. He gave you His Holy Word, and He gave you the HOLY SPIRIT to dwell in your heart and to reveal to you clearly what is taught in that Bible about your Saviour.

Take your Bible; believe in the HOLY GHOST; ask Him to help you; and try to learn—what has been taught to-day—the blessings which were made over to you by your Baptism into CHRIST.

2. Submit your will to GOD. As soon as you understand your position, believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Act on what is revealed. Having learnt that GOD has given you a Saviour, and that this LORD JESUS CHRIST has broken down every barrier, and that, having been baptized into Him, your debt has been paid by Him, go on to the next step. In the dark, with but very imperfect knowledge as yet, and with no eye upon you, it may be, but His, make up your mind, though without feeling any improvement in yourself, without love, without any power to pray—make up your

mind to *trust* Him, as a child in the dark trusts its mother.

3. Seek to be filled with the peace and joy of believing. Having *first* trusted Him, instead of waiting to trust Him till you have found peace, try to obtain, in God's way, the peace which passeth understanding. Seek for it as God has taught us to seek ; not, at this stage, by hard struggling self-examination, although that is most useful afterwards ; but by simply *looking up to the Brazen Serpent*. Read about JESUS. Try to realize His Presence. Speak to Him, if only by a few short words such as, "LORD, help me! Open mine eyes! If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

Take it up again and again if interrupted. If obliged to go out to work ask His help again when you come back. If duty calls you into the way of temptation God will make a way for you to escape ; He will help you to overcome : but, so far as it lies in your own power, keep out of everything that would deaden the sense of the Kingdom invisible and eternal. Face to face go on speaking to Jesus Himself. Think of Him in His Agony. Think of Him on the Cross. Try to picture that Cross, those pierced hands, that crown of thorns ; then speak to Him as now alive, listening to your prayer, and say, "LORD JESUS, Thou wast wounded for *my* transgressions! LORD, I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief! Open mine eyes! Show me Thyself!"

4. Seek, if need be, the help of God's ministers. If you are not able, alone, to realize your acceptance in CHRIST, use the other help that God has provided for you. Go to one of His ministers. He has ordained them for this very work—to lead you to CHRIST. No great experience is needed at this point ; a clergyman who has only lately been ordained, if he knows the

peace of God in his own heart, can help you here as much as the most experienced guide. Any man who has really gone that road himself can point it out to others. The experience of many years has taught me this : that men and women who are too proud to use the help which God provided for finding their road to heaven, very often lose it altogether. I have found that men who are determined to go on quacking their own constitutions, instead of going to those whom CHRIST has ordained as His physicians, very often find the same result in their spiritual maladies as men who never ask the doctor to help them find in bodily ailments, and discover, too late, that they have ruined their health.

But, dear brethren, in some way or other—whether by the help of others, or alone—this step *must* be taken. It is my calm and solemn conviction, confirmed by the experience of my entire ministry, that, in whatever way that knowledge may come to us, suddenly or gradually, until we know something of the peace of God which passeth all understanding, true progress is impossible. Till we have realized the forgiveness of sins, the very earnestness which might have raised us into the rank of saints will only drive us into the depths of a morbid superstition, or of a hopeless despair.

Saul of Tarsus was a strong man, and he struggled with all the intensity of his nature to make his soul acceptable to God ; but he never found peace or power, until, broken down by the living Spirit, crushed to the earth, spiritually as well as literally, he submitted himself to that crucified King Whom he saw on those Eastern plains, manifested in His all-conquering might, “glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save !”

If this inversion of the order of God’s teaching, by which you try *first* to be *made holy*, and *then* to *believe*,

is the result of ignorance, you are to be pitied ! May the LORD GOD open your eyes !

But if it be the effect of prejudice, or pride, or self-will, or a resolve to abide by the teaching that you chose for yourself forty years ago, then, my brother, you must be sharply rebuked. You are trying to be wiser than your Maker. You are fighting against God. You are using the intellect which God gave you against that God, Who desires to convince your intellect as well as to convert your will.

In any case, the less time you waste on an experiment that has often been tried, but never has succeeded, the better it will be for your own happiness and for your influence over your fellow-men. You may become a civilized heathen, you may even rise to be a respectable Jew, but you can never go forward in the Christian life till you have first stood still to see the salvation of GOD.

But some will tell us that it is presumptuous to believe that the High and Lofty One, Whose Name is Holy, has cast all our sins behind His back for ever. Let me ask you, which course is the most presumptuous : to accept, on the warrant of the King, the amnesty which that King has publicly proclaimed ; or to continue in rebellion against His Throne, and to treat all words of pardon, such as, "The Blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth us from all sin," as the offers of a deceiver and a liar ? Which of the two is the more presumptuous : to believe, or *not* to believe, in the LORD JESUS CHRIST ?

But, perhaps, you have been taught that a religion which consists in mere believing is a very easy thing ; utterly alien to the Christianity of the Crucified. God forbid, my brethren, that a religion of *mere* believing should ever be taught in this place. Yet I am not surprised if you are perplexed. Verily, the lives of believers are the greatest stumbling-block to the recep-

tion of the Gospel of CHRIST. But you must use common sense. You must not judge this blessed truth by its small effect on the crowd who compound for their selfishness and cowardice and worldliness, by the distinctness of their evangelical utterances, deceiving their own selves. You must not judge God's truth by those wretched counterfeits. Judge, rather, of its divine power by its influence on men who, like the Apostle Paul, set free from all anxiety about their own acceptance, have gone forth, with their lives in their hands, to labour and, if need be, to die, for the deliverance of mankind. Judge of the power of God's free grace by lives such as these.

Forgiveness is the beginning, and not the end, of the Christian life. We are set free, at once, from the burden of guilt, in order that we may *run* in the way of God's commandments with a heart at liberty ; that we may live in Him and for Him ; that, being nourished by the Body and Blood of our LORD, we may grow in grace, and bring forth fruit unto holiness, to the praise of the glory of His grace Who hath made us accepted in the Beloved.

Is all this clear to you intellectually ? Or do you say, "It may be true, but I cannot see it. I am too busy ; too unhappy ; too much bound by cords of evil which I cannot sever" ?

Dear brethren, what do you mean by this ? If you are really seeking deliverance, all the Gospels for Epiphany can tell you, better than I can tell, of His love and power in Whom you are asked to believe.

But if what you mean is this : that you are content to neglect this great salvation ; that, because you are anxious about your worldly prospects, or *afraid of the results of a real conversion to God*, afraid of not being considered a true Churchman, etc., you intend to go

on, with your heart shut against that peace, content to hear me say, Sunday after Sunday, from that holy table, "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your heart and mind, through CHRIST JESUS," and yet never seek it for yourself, never care whether you have it or not—then the truth of God must not be withheld. It were better for you never to have entered this church to-day ! It were better for you not to have known the way of righteousness than to turn from the holy commandment delivered to you, "Believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST."

In the words of the Bible, you are trampling under foot the SON of GOD. However amiable you may be, however beloved, and rightly beloved, by your families ; however respectable your life may be ; however much outward work you may be doing, you are trampling under foot the Blood of God's dear SON ; you are doing despite to God's own Blessed Spirit, Who is even now pleading with your wayward heart, desiring to guide you into that "peace of God which passeth understanding." May God help you, before it is too late ! You are either despising, or fighting against, the LORD JESUS CHRIST, though you know that the very next train you enter may land you, not where you wish to go, but in His Royal Presence-Chamber, to see Him face to face, "glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength," speaking, as He ever must speak, in righteousness ; but mighty, in that day, not to save, but—to judge !

God help you, if there be but *one* here who knows not what it is to believe in the LORD JESUS CHRIST !

X

CONVERSION

"Be converted."

Acts iii. 19.

WE are about to keep the festival of the Conversion of Saul of Tarsus. What is conversion? You have often, I dare say, seen the question printed on the outside of tracts, and the like, in the windows of our booksellers, "Are you converted?" If the question were asked of myself, I should reply that I was unable to answer it until the person by whom the question was addressed had defined the meaning of the term which he was employing.

The word *converted*, in itself, conveys no definite idea. It is (as you are aware) simply the Latin form of the monosyllable *turn*. In fact, in the Revised Version of the Bible, the word *convert* has almost entirely passed out of sight, being replaced by *turn again*. It is obvious that if you were asked whether you had turned, you must be told what you are expected to have turned from, and what you are to turn to.

In the literal sense of the word, you and I do not need the conversion of S. Paul, for we were not born Jews. In the sense in which history tells us that Constantine was converted to Christianity, the entire English nation is converted.

But do I mean by this that we can dismiss conversion as an obsolete term only being used by those

whom we pity as not having attained to the fullness of Church teaching? No, my brethren, you may take for granted this; that if ever any term has fastened on the minds of a large mass of intelligent persons, that term expresses an idea which it is worth your while to consider, and to consider most carefully.

The explanation, I venture to think, of the power that the word *conversion* exercises on many minds is this. I remember once meeting a man who told me that when he was a boy he went to church, and he heard a sermon preached upon the danger of religious excitement. The point of the discourse was this; that if a person had been baptized, and went to Communion at certain fixed periods, and paid his debts, and did no harm; that man, in virtue of his Baptism was sure to go to heaven. And the practical application of the sermon was this, "Be not righteous over much." And the result of that sermon upon my friend was this; that he never entered a church again for thirty years, and became a leader amongst the Wesleyan section of Christians in that parish.

My brethren, that teaching was once only too current in our Church, before the blessed revival of last century.

It is a degradation of humanity. Almighty God is a great, noble (I say it with reverence), generous Being. He would rather—again I speak with reverence—He would rather incur the risk of our wills being used against Him, than rob us of that glorious birthright of our liberty. We are intelligent creatures, endowed with a free will, which we are to use for or against God as we choose. "Choose this day whom ye will serve." "Behold, I set before you life and death, therefore choose life." Many other passages of the same kind might be adduced.

Almighty God does not take us like helpless babies,

wrapped in swaddling clothes at the font, carried through in a nurse's arms, down into the valley of the shadow of death, up to the golden gates into the new Jerusalem. We should be utterly wretched when we found ourselves in the companionship and in the midst of beings of a higher order, beings who have been trained and disciplined to exercise the whole force of their being on the side of God against the powers of evil by which they have been assailed. No! The true teaching of the Prayer Book is contained in that Christmas Day Collect, wherein we thank Almighty God that we have been regenerated, and we pray that we may be renewed.

Or, to put it in other language. For reasons that we cannot explain, God Almighty chose each of you, distinctly put His mark upon you, made you part of "a chosen generation and a royal priesthood" (I am quoting Bible language), in order that you might work with Him in His great schemes for the regeneration of the world. You were born again of water and the HOLY GHOST at the font. The Baptismal Service tells you so over and over again. Every part of the New Testament bases our position upon our Baptism into the CHRIST that died and rose again. Unless you repudiate altogether Bible teaching, you cannot ignore the fact that the first link between the soul and God, so far as we know, is our Baptism.

There, then, you were chosen. Blessed are you. "Blessed are your eyes," as CHRIST Himself says to His followers, "for they see, and your ears, for they hear." You have been chosen to the highest position, "made a member of CHRIST, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven"; put into a state in which every power of heaven and earth is at your disposal, in order that you may be thoroughly and entirely surrendered to the LORD GOD Almighty, and able to work

with Him as an intelligent agent, in carrying out (as I have said) His great schemes for the regeneration of humanity.

Our early life depends to a large extent upon natural temperament, upon the nature we have inherited from our parents, and the circumstances by which we are surrounded. Some children live in a holy Christian home, surrounded by nothing but heavenly influences, growing up loving, amiable; coming, perhaps, to be confirmed, and to Communion; peaceful and quiet, not knowing evil. God bless them! Others grow up amid the storms and tempests of this lower earth; with a drunken father who has passed on a corrupted nature; an unrestrained, undisciplined mother, who has communicated to her children tendencies which too soon develop, even in the nursery. But whether they have been outwardly good or outwardly bad, the time comes in which they have to make up their mind on which side they are going to be. No human being can say of any individual child whether that opportunity for decision has been given to it or not. But the age when the child has passed out of babyhood, and has not yet come openly forward before the Church with an intelligent knowledge of its position as a member of CHRIST and a child of God, is one of intense anxiety to parents. But the time does come when that which is represented by this word *conversion* has to take place. We toss the word aside entirely, as I said before. In the Bible it simply means turning. JESUS turned Himself, or converted Himself, looked round. But the substance, the reality, the idea which is expressed by the word, is one of the most vital importance for every baptized Christian.

There comes a time when the soul has to decide whether it is to be on CHRIST's side or not; whether it is to throw back into the face of heaven the blessing of

its Baptism, or joyfully and thankfully to take its part as a follower of the Crucified. "Baptism doth represent unto us our profession." The choice comes. Will you keep and adopt the profession of CHRIST, or will you trample under foot the Blood of the covenant, and account that Blood an unholy thing, and do despite to the Spirit of grace?

Here no one can judge his brother. Over and over again the clergyman stands by the bedside of a friend whom he has loved as his own soul. He has never been satisfied about his spiritual condition. He can only commit him to God with humble hope, but with awful misgivings.

There is often a long preparatory process, just as we shall see when we consider S. Paul's conversion. The ox-goad had been pricking him for a long time. You remember the words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? . . . it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." The word *prick* is literally an ox-goad; and the idea is of the great sluggish ox, that the driver is trying with a sharp ox-goad to force on; and it keeps kicking back and hurting itself, bleeding and wounded, because it will not obey the voice of its guide. And so there comes to us many an ox-goad. Oh! you have felt it, I have; when the friend died, when the little child was laid in the grave, when sorrow and trouble came, when some great joy filled your heart and you longed to thank God, and love God all your life. At these critical periods, a sharp goad was driven in. Ah! how often we kicked back and lost our peace, and the joy we might have obtained; lost the whole blessed teaching of those long months of trial and discipline; lost the glorious outcome of those marriage bells, when we might have gone out with joy, praising and blessing the God Who had dealt so lovingly with us! There is many an ox-goad driven into the

sluggish soul of the baptized child, long, long before the critical turning-point arrives.

But what is the result? How can I know whether I have turned? How can I know whether I have in this way fulfilled the object of my Baptism? How do I know whether this first act of my intelligence has been indeed performed?

The Bible, dear brethren, leaves us in no doubt on this subject. In the Old Testament it is GOD, in the New Testament it is GOD manifested in JESUS CHRIST, as I have tried to show you. These five signs of the real turning to GOD need not follow, often do not follow in the order in which I give them. GOD works at "sundry times and in divers manners." But the five signs you can find in the Bible; in the history of Isaiah in the sixth chapter of that prophecy, just as much as in every page of the New Testament.

1. There is, first, the intelligent recognition of JESUS CHRIST as GOD. JESUS is GOD. I believe in Him as GOD.

2. There is, secondly, that submission to Him which we have often considered in the light of the glorious apocalyptic vision. There is the giving and taking of our will. "Our wills are ours" (as the poet says), "we know not how; our wills are ours, O CHRIST, to make them Thine." There is the taking of our will, and giving it up to Him (as the wife gives up herself to her husband, having no idea what part of the world she may be sent to), not knowing what trials or blessings may be in store for us. The submission of the will to CHRIST to be His.

3. Thirdly, there is the acknowledgement of our utter guilt in the past, of the want of loving GOD with all our mind and soul and strength, and of our utter

helplessness for the future, that without God we can do nothing.

4. Then, fourthly, there is the thankful remembrance of His death, the humble belief in the Blood of CHRIST, which brings peace, calm peace, in calm minds; joyous, excited peace in persons of an impassioned temperament, but a peace of God that passes understanding: a knowledge based upon the Word of God, applied by God the HOLY GHOST; the promise of God appropriated by faith, we who believe enter into rest: justified by faith, we have peace (or, "let us have peace," whichever way you translate it), with God through JESUS CHRIST.

5. And, lastly, there is the acknowledgement of CHRIST with the lips. "With the heart," the Bible says, "man believes; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and shalt believe in thine heart that GOD raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." And it is clear, my brethren, that this is reasonable, because, after all, it is by our words that we can be judged, and by our words that we can be condemned. If a man is proud of His wine, sooner or later his friends find it out, as they know his favourite vintage. If a man is proud of his horses, his friends will not stay long with him before they will have gone round the stables and known all about them. If a man loves his wife, the world is not long in discovering it. If we are proud of any friend, those with whom we consort are not long in finding out our respect and affection for him. Even so, my brethren (I say it deliberately, after having weighed the question for years), I have no confidence in the religion of any one, if that religion only finds its place in what is called making no profession, hiding the light under a bushel, so that the

man lives and dies without those who know him best ever hearing him openly and avowedly say, "I am on the side of CHRIST, and the LORD JESUS CHRIST rules my life, and I form my habits by the judgement of JESUS CHRIST, in my business, in my pleasure, in the amount I spend on my dinners, in the amount I spend on my wine and my horses ; in the amount that, as an upper servant, I give to myself, and the amount I put aside for my GOD ; in the way in which I use my intellect ; in the use to which I put the strength—physical, mental, spiritual—that GOD has given me. I acknowledge CHRIST."

"Let no man," S. Paul says, "trouble me." My mistakes are infinite. I could not live, if it were not for His Blood washing away my sin. But the Apostle says, "Let no man trouble me : for I bear in my body the marks of the LORD JESUS." You may look at it ; it is here ; branded, as the slave bore the name of his master branded on his arm.

These, my brethren, are five signs which every part of the Bible gives us : which all the experience of High Church and Low Church people united give us : the recognition of CHRIST as GOD ; the submission of the will to CHRIST ; the recognition of our own guilt and helplessness ; the thankful acceptance of the free forgiveness through the precious Blood ; and the confession with the lips, to the glory of the CHRIST Who has died and risen again.

There is much to be done after this turning-point. The mistake, as a rule, that Dissenters make is in too often leaving the impression—I will not say they intend it, but leaving the impression—upon their converts that when once they have made this definite turn, nothing else remains. But everything evidently remains in the future. You know, Christian brethren, how, as life

rolls on, the impulsive man has to try and be calm and restrained ; the selfish to be unselfish ; the narrow to be broad and liberal ; and those who thought that Catholic truth was of no importance have to submit themselves to the yoke of revealed religion. There is Holy Communion, ever increasing in frequency, ever increasingly valued, there is larger offering of everything to CHRIST ; larger giving up, more large-hearted surrender of all that we are and all that we have ; a longing to work, and a desire to spend and be spent.

I cannot express the outward life better than in those noble words of the Apostle Paul, whose conversion we are about to celebrate. After some thirty years had passed from the day when he first saw the CHRIST and yielded up his entire being to Him—more than thirty years afterwards, looking back on that life of manifold trials and persecutions and afflictions, he said : “The motive of it all has been this, the love of CHRIST constraineth me.”

“I never saw it”—some one said to me in a letter last week—“I never saw till now that while I have been so wicked, CHRIST all the time has been loving me ; and that has nearly broken my heart ; for the past, that I have been so selfish and ungrateful ; for the future, with joy that He Who has loved me will never leave me nor forsake me.”

The Apostle looked back, and “the love of CHRIST, so fully shown to me,” he says, “constraineth me. I have seen the LORD.” He saw Him, as you and I see Him now, with the eye of faith. While I speak, there are faces turned towards me, who know that with the eye of faith they are looking now at Him Whose hands were pierced, Whose head was crowned with thorns. Is it not so, dear brethren ? Can we not now, by faith, see CHRIST as truly as if He were present, with the

bodily eye? We believe in Him, and we can see Him; and we know that He is with us, for we know that He is true. The Apostle looked back. He said, "That love of CHRIST constraineth me not to live to myself, but to Him Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

That love constrained him. The Greek word means the force with which the current of a mighty stream is driven into a narrow channel; and the waters roll on, deep, solemn, silent, but with an irresistible force, dashing every bridge asunder, laying low houses, homes, temples, everything in its resistless current. The love of CHRIST forces me on, with a calm, solemn, onward march.

My brethren, are you in this sense converted? Are you? Are you? Has the first step been taken? If you died, shall we think (though we would never express it in words), "He was baptized, God called him; he was a good man; he was a kind father; outwardly he did no harm, and a great deal of good; I was his best friend, but, so far as I could judge, not one of these five signs was ever manifested in his life!"

God forbid that we should judge. Many a poor outcast will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, perhaps, before either you or me. But for this great multitude this morning in the valley of decision; for that great congregation, redeemed, baptized, called by the Living God, what shall I say? "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive the glory and the riches and the honour and the power." I claim your life, in the Name of my King Who died for you. I plead with you, brothers, sisters. If it were my last word, I should plead with you. As you love your life, as you long for an eternity of joy, be alone to-day with your God. Take your Bible and your Prayer Book, and lock the door, and rest not day by day till you can look up humbly and say, "I have (thank God for it) been converted."

PART II

THE MESSAGE OF PARDON

*“Most willing to pardon us, if we come unto Him with
faithful repentance.”*

I

ARISE !

“ Son, be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee.”

S. MATT. ix. 2.

BY a few graphic touches, my brethren, the whole scene of this miracle has been so completely reproduced by the inspired Evangelist that we are able, almost without an effort, to imagine the circumstances under which the words of the text were spoken.

Our LORD JESUS CHRIST is in Capernaum. Numbers have pressed upon Him to hear the Word of GOD. Suddenly there is a pause. Every eye is raised to the ceiling ; an opening is made and a couch is seen to descend, let down by four corners into the midst of the crowded chamber ; on that little bed is laid a poor man who for long has been afflicted with palsy. The fame of the wonder-working JESUS of Nazareth has quickened the efforts of his relatives. Their resolution once formed, no hindrances have been allowed to interfere with the plan from which such great results are anticipated. The poor man is unable to walk. They must carry him on his couch to the house where JESUS is sojourning. They arrive : the house is crowded. It is impossible to touch the hem of His garment. It is impossible even to enter into the room in which our LORD is speaking to the assembled multitude. But they will not be baffled. It is easy to ascend

from the street to the flat roof of an Eastern dwelling, so they carry their burden up that staircase outside the house, and then part of the tiling is uncovered and the sufferer is gently lowered, and in a few moments he is lying in the midst of the crowd at the feet of the Redeemer.

Dwell, my brethren, for a while on that picture. It is the old story of sin and weariness, and of grace and love still flowing down to pardon and to bless. The sinner in his need has met Him Who is called JESUS because He saves His people from their sins.

Weakness! Power! The poor suffering child of Adam, lying there in his silent supplication; the Second Adam, the LORD of Life, the glorious conquering King (blessed be His Name!) looking down on that sufferer, with His look of love unutterable! In that look Omniscient Wisdom and Almighty Power are mingled with the tenderest human sympathy. With His all-searching eye He penetrates into the inmost chamber of that troubled spirit. There He beholds—hidden from the world around, hidden, it may be, from his dearest friend, that burden, in comparison with which the bodily agony by which he was afflicted was scarcely felt—sin! Sin was lying on that man's conscience; the burden of unforgiven sin: remorse, it may be, for the past, doubt of the present, and at times a fearful looking forward to the coming Judgement.

Like rivers of water into a thirsty land, like the balm of Gilead into an open wound, come the first words of JESUS CHRIST. They stream into that man's yearning spirit. In language befitting His mission as the Healer of Humanity, the solemn silence is broken by the LORD of Life: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

The world is well represented in that dwelling of

Capernaum : that busy, carping, selfish, quarrelsome world. It dares not speak in open opposition to the new-found idol of the populace. Not openly, therefore, but in low murmurs, it gives vent to its indignation—"This man blasphemeth !" He, the son of Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth ! how dare *he* say, "Thy sins be forgiven" ? "Who can forgive sins but God only ?"

It is not necessary that murmurs should be clothed in words ; God knows the heart. God understands our thoughts : your thoughts, my thoughts. Oh, what a solemn fact that is for you and for me, my brethren ! The eye of God looks deeper down than the evil deed, deeper than the omitted duty, deeper than the spoken word, deep down into the yet unuttered "thoughts and intents of the heart." The LORD searcheth the heart. "O God," saith the Psalmist, "Thou understandest my thoughts afar off"—every thought that has passed through your mind this day, and all your life.

"Why reason ye these things," He said, "in your hearts ? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee ; or to say, Arise, and walk ?" In other words : "You consider that it is not difficult for any impostor, to say to his brother-man, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' because the Day of Judgement alone will reveal how far that pardon has been ratified in heaven. I will therefore humble Myself now, in this room at Capernaum, so far as to bring My words to the tribunal of your human judgement. If I, by My word of power, can restore life to the palsied limbs of that man lying there at your feet ; if, in obedience to My command, that man shall arise and walk, then you will acknowledge that I have power to say to the sin-laden soul, 'Thy sins are forgiven.'" No answer is returned. Every eye is fixed upon the paralytic. "I say unto thee"—

such is the calm utterance of conscious strength in which JESUS manifests His miracle-working power—"I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." The command is obeyed. The man quietly arises. He takes up the bed on which he is lying (a sort of light mattress, easily carried, as any Eastern traveller will remember), and passes through the crowd, and is gone to his own home.

There the narrative leaves him. No effort is made to heighten the effect of the wondrous story. We can imagine his thankfulness in feeling strong and well again, the gratitude of the parents, the confusion of the Scribes and Pharisees ; the utter blind amazement of the crowd by whom the miracle had been witnessed. But it is enough for the holy writers to describe the facts. The sinner and the Saviour had met, and the sinner had been forgiven. He who felt the need, and He Who came to supply every need, had been brought into contact.

The miracle is a parable for the Church in every age. Its teaching is inexhaustible. May God the HOLY SPIRIT apply it to us, for JESUS CHRIST's sake. Amen.

1. It should make the heart of the hypocrite, the double-minded man, shrivel.

"Our God is a consuming fire." JESUS knew their thoughts. "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." "Whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard" one day, "in the light ; and that which ye have spoken in the ear" confidentially, "shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops." The LORD searcheth the heart. His eyes are "as a flame of fire." This should be the prayer of every man, "Search me, O God. Prove me, and examine my thoughts. Look well if there be any way

of wickedness in me, and lead me—not in the way that the world will praise, but—in the way everlasting!”

2. It unfolds the divine power, the personal knowledge of every secret burden of our hearts, the tender individualizing love, of the compassionate JESUS of Nazareth.

Eternity, dear brethren, would scarcely be long enough to reveal the fullness of that one word, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven.” “JESUS CHRIST”—blessed be His Name!—this JESUS, by Whom the words were spoken, is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” What a comfort there is in that one thought.

3. It suggests to us the unspeakable blessing that is always waiting for every penitent and believing soul, whenever the Bride of CHRIST, speaking in the Name of the LORD, utters the word of Absolution. “As My FATHER sent Me, even so send I you.” “Whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven; depart in peace.” Take heed, dear brethren, whenever you enter GOD’S Presence, take heed how you hear that blessed message, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.”

This passage teaches us the power, not merely of Christian intercession, but of Christian fellowship; the force that is brought to bear upon the individual soul, wherever a few believers are gathered together with one accord in one place, with one voice proclaiming the glory of GOD, and with one heart remembering before GOD those words of the charter of the New Dispensation, “Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them.”

In the words of a modern teacher, “As the palsied man had need to be borne of four, and so let down

through the roof, at the feet of that strange Presence of healing power, around Whom the world in its helplessness and amazement was crowded ; just as that poor sufferer was healed, through the confidence of his friends ; their faith, observe, not supplying his own lack of faith—that would be impossible—but quickening and strengthening him, through the force of their sympathy and their perseverance ; they so believed, they were so strong in faith, they so persevered, that they lifted up the man's poor faith, weakened by long days of illness : just so, one soul can strengthen another, one soul can pray for another ; and borne upon the outwardly expressed trust of another's stronger faith, its own feeble energy may be enabled to rise."

"They that feared the LORD spake often one to another": not only to GOD, observe, but "one to another : and the LORD hearkened, and heard" ; He heard them speaking one to another ; "and a book of remembrance was written before Him." "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together ; . . . but exhorting one another ; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"—the day of the LORD's Advent. "I will give thanks unto the LORD with my whole heart," said the Psalmist, taught by the HOLY GHOST ; "secretly among the faithful, and in the congregation"—secretly and quietly, with a few Christian people, as well as publicly.

"JESUS, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee." If miracles of healing are to be wrought in our midst, Christians must be found together with one accord in one place, speaking good of the LORD, ascribing glory to His Name, praising GOD. It is not, however, especially on the character of the hypocrite, or the blessed meaning of Absolution, or the power of Chris-

tian fellowship, that I desire, in conclusion, to fix your thoughts to-day. There is one word in the text—"Forgiven"—which I desire especially to impress upon your minds.

My brethren, do you understand your position in the New Dispensation? It was blessed for Abraham to be called "the friend of God." It was blessed for the Jews, under the Old Covenant, to be allowed to bring the lamb to the door of the Temple, and as they laid their hands upon it, acknowledging their sin, to be told by the ministering priest, in the Name of the LORD, that the LORD had put away their sin. It was blessed for this paralysed man, when CHRIST was on earth, to hear Him say, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven." But the glory of the Patriarchal Dispensation, and the beauty of the Jewish Covenant, and the intense delight of personal contact with the LORD JESUS CHRIST on earth, have all been eclipsed by the brightness of that meridian sun, in the full light of which it is our privilege, as baptized into CHRIST, day by day, to walk.

Have you understood your position? Almighty God having, to use human language, tried every means, has now given to us the greatest of all blessings. He takes the little child and puts it into the Body of CHRIST. He makes it a member of CHRIST, the child of God, and the heir of the Kingdom of Heaven, with all its unspeakable privileges. He tells us, in well-nigh every page of the New Testament, that on account of what the LORD JESUS CHRIST has done and suffered on Calvary, the whole deed, as it were, on which our sins are written, has been torn asunder, riven into tatters by those nails of the Cross. He tells us that whatever had to be done or suffered for sin, so far as forgiveness is concerned, has been done

and has been suffered by JESUS CHRIST. It was all completed when He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said to His FATHER, in the face of the blessed angels and the company of the holy ones, "It is finished."

Do you understand what I mean, brethren? The key-note of the New Dispensation in which you and I are living, as distinguished from the position of this paralysed man when JESUS was on earth, is this: that God wills to be approached by us as sinners hidden in JESUS CHRIST, with the rags and tatters of our natural clothing as entirely covered as I am shrouded now in this surplice—hidden. The deeper work of self-examination, the whole discipline of the Christian life, must come afterwards. But the point that I want to fix in your minds to-day, by the help of the HOLY SPIRIT, is this: that it is the clearly-revealed Will of God that those whom He has elected to be baptized into the Body of JESUS CHRIST should believe in that LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thus, simply covered with the white robe of their LORD's perfect Personality, appear before Him "accepted in the Beloved," "forgiven." And therefore our duty is this:—

First of all, to take your Bible and seek to understand whether the word of the preacher is true.

Then, when you have understood the fact that this is the gift of the Everlasting God, since the Incarnation of JESUS CHRIST, the next step is this: with your will—though it be without any feeling, without any consciousness, without any peace or joy—with your will to resolve that you will accept that which God has clearly been pleased to bestow.

And then, kneeling down, there comes, it may be, a struggle, in which we have to ask God to increase our faith. "LORD, I believe; I will believe Thy Word. I thank Thee that Thou hast written it for me."

Then take some text that you have found out for yourself, such as, "The Blood of JESUS CHRIST cleanseth us from all sin," or, "We have redemption through His Blood, the forgiveness of sins"; and thank God that it is so written. Tell Him that you do not feel it, but that you believe it; and pray Him to give you faith, for faith is the gift of God. Then read a few more passages, and turn them into thanksgivings. Go on, if you are able, hour after hour; or whenever you have five minutes to spare, go back to where you left it, and say, "O God, I will believe, but I cannot realize it; give me faith."

And then you will find faith. "Seek, and ye shall find." It may come very slowly, or it may come suddenly, in a moment. I have seen many souls receive it in a moment whom I have afterwards watched out of this life into Paradise. They lived steady consistent lives, as consistent as those who had been gradually brought out into the light. The faith may come suddenly, or it may come very gradually, for natures differ; some are calm, some are emotional; in some intellect predominates, in others feeling. It may come—I have seen it—with a deep joy that makes the voice falter, and the tears flow down the cheek, and the impassioned soul, unable to speak calmly, cry out, "Thank God, I know it! Thank God, it is true!" Or it may come calmly and quietly, the believing soul only saying, "This I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."

If you persevere in this way you will succeed, unless yours is a very exceptional case. Of course, there may be certain hindrances. Prejudice, early training, a very proud nature, great self-will, an intense fear of being unfashionable in religion, or of being classed with Methodists; all these may for a time stop the soul that is coming to the Saviour. But these cases are

exceptional. GOD desires, I firmly believe, that what I say from that holy table at the end of the service should be realized by all; that the sinner should realize his acceptance in CHRIST, and know "the peace that passeth all understanding."

And, further, GOD Almighty desires, I believe, that when a believer has fallen, he should not imagine that he is cut off from the Vine, to be grafted in again when he has properly repented. As a member of CHRIST, still in the true Vine, he should thank GOD, even out of his degradation, for the completeness of the Atonement. In CHRIST, the very moment after the fall, he should arise, repent, and believe, even while he is ashamed to lift up his eyes unto heaven, and can only say, "Thank GOD, I am still His child; O GOD, be merciful to me the sinner!"

My brethren, you who believe in JESUS, but have lost the freshness of your faith; you who are living outside, as it were, of the door, when GOD wishes you, whatever the past may have been, to be rejoicing in the LORD; you who are outside when the LORD GOD would have you to be praising His holy Name, and going up with glad triumphant songs to conquer the earth for the Crucified: to you this word is spoken. For you the CHRIST present in our midst is waiting to-day; desiring, if only you would open your hearts to Him, to say to you, by the HOLY SPIRIT, "Son," not merely be earnest; not merely be moral; not merely strive, struggle, repent, pray, try to improve, though all this is good in its way: but, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

II

FORGIVEN

“ Arise.”

S. MATT. ix. 6.

WE considered, my brethren, on Sunday last, the picturesque details of this portion of Holy Scripture. Especially I tried to bring before you that glorious privilege which we, the believing children of God, enjoy, as contrasted even with those whose lot was cast in the days of our LORD's earthly pilgrimage. They were oft-times unable to come at Him, for the press ; they were obliged oft-times to follow Him from Jerusalem to Galilee, from Galilee to the coast of Tyre and Sidon. But we, who have been baptized into CHRIST, and have believed in that LORD JESUS CHRIST, true God and true Man—we, who are living in the glorious light of which CHRIST Himself spoke in those wondrous words, “ It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, greater works than these shall ye do ; because I go to the FATHER ” ; we, living in the dispensation of GOD the HOLY SPIRIT, are allowed to hear, not merely at certain times and places, but every moment of our lives, the voice of the Everlasting God, addressing to us those words of power which we last considered, “ Son (or daughter), be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee ; depart in peace.”

I pass on at once to the thought suggested by that word of my text, "Arise."

Here, first of all, as we gaze on this poor helpless man lying at the feet of JESUS CHRIST in that room of Capernaum, we are brought face to face with the whole question of miracles. To dwell at any length upon that subject is impossible in the limits of a morning sermon. There is, however, a caution and an encouragement too important, I think, to be altogether omitted by way of introduction.

First, there is a caution. We who are specially concerned with the facts of the spiritual Kingdom have need to take great care how we speak of those to whom God has assigned another branch of the work that is entrusted to a finite humanity. We have need to be very guarded in our language, when we speak of those students of science whose office it is to tabulate the results of experience; to gather up from the study of God's works a knowledge of what God at present is pleased to do, or has done in bygone ages. Many, who are considered unbelievers by superficial Christians, mean, by what they say and write, nothing more than this: "The work assigned to me is simply to concern myself with that which I can see and handle. I am bound to weigh everything by the strictest rules whereby evidence can be tested. I put faith entirely aside, in that province of God's world with which I am specially concerned. I neither assert nor deny miracles. I merely say that they do not come within my province."

Now, my brethren, that course is very intelligible. If we were tabulating the results of what God has done in a temperate zone, it would be utterly out of place to be continually inserting a parenthesis to the effect that grander results, larger leaves, more magnificent fruits of nature, might be developed under a tropical climate.

Our work would be simply with the results visible in the temperate zone.

Therefore, while we pity any man who has deliberately rejected the Truth of GOD as revealed in JESUS CHRIST, and denied the Godhead of JESUS CHRIST, it is well for us, and it is our part, as Christians, because we know the Truth, and because the Truth has made us free, to welcome every worker in GOD's great vineyard, from whatever quarter he may approach us, however little he may realize what seems to us of great importance.

And, secondly, as an encouragement, we can remain perfectly satisfied that a belief in miracles, as distinguished from a strict accurate knowledge, is conformable not only to the dictates of the Bible, but to the reason with which Almighty GOD has endowed us. For consider a moment; if we say that we believe in a GOD, what do we mean? We believe in the existence of One higher and greater than ourselves. To worship corruptible things, to take a block of wood or stone, and to call that our god; to bow down before creeping things, as the heathen degraded themselves at the time of the Apostle Paul's writing to the Romans; to change the glory of the incorruptible GOD into the image of a corruptible god, into the image of a corruptible man, is as repugnant to our reason as to our faith (Acts xvii. 29). It is a degradation of humanity not to believe that the GOD Whom we adore is higher and nobler than ourselves.

Granting, then, that there is a GOD, He must have powers higher and grander than any that we have as yet experienced. It is simply a question of evidence, how far He has been pleased to manifest those secret powers. Just as you and I, individual Christians, in looking back upon our lives, have found, at every great crisis in our individual training, that there was a hidden power in the

treasury of GOD's strength that we could never have believed in the days of our childhood ; even so it is in accordance with the very alphabet of reason to believe that there are, hidden in the grand counsels of the Eternal, capacities for development, higher laws, alike in the physical and in the spiritual world, such as the eye of man has not yet seen, nor the unaided mind of man been able to conceive.

He who refuses to believe that greater things can be done than those which he himself has witnessed would be in the condition of the ignorant man who fifty years ago might have said that the forces of electricity were but a figment of the imagination, and that electric light was an impossibility. As we believe that the results which we shall yet see in the present world (if it continue long enough) shall transcend all with which our forefathers have been familiar, so we may believe that when the New Dispensation shall have been inaugurated, that which is now a miracle will be the normal condition of GOD's regenerated world. We look for "a new heaven and a new earth" in which old things shall have passed away.

The miracles of the first Advent were, in one sense, natural. They were certainly reasonable. It was reasonable that when GOD was on earth, something more than human results should be exhibited. When GOD is on earth again, in the glory of the second Advent, it will be reasonable to expect that something more than that which the mind of man has hitherto conceived shall be the ordinary experience of every regenerated child of Adam. Thanks be to GOD for it ! There is before us a magnificent future, hidden as yet in the eternal counsels of GOD. Speaking, then, with the greatest respect of all who work in other parts of GOD's labour-field ; thankful that GOD has given us nothing to believe that is antago-

nistic to our reason—however much it may transcend its power of grasping it, in the present dispensation—we approach the more spiritual teaching of this wonderful story.

And herein, first, our minds are fixed upon that old word, faith. Although the friends of the paralytic had the power to lay him at the feet of JESUS CHRIST, he was not, when lying there, to be treated as dumb inanimate matter. God deals with His children as with intelligent beings. Jesus went, we are told, into certain villages of Palestine; and in one place where He desired specially to do some wonderful works, He was hindered, through the want of response in the beings to whom He addressed Himself. “He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marvelled because of their unbelief.”

This man was told to “arise.” That word would have sounded like mockery in his ears, if he had listened merely in the light of his past experience. He had been lying there helpless; he had been taken from his home helpless; borne through the streets helpless; and so let down through the open roof. The only result was this: no hand stretched forth to uplift him; no power exerted that man could see—a simple word, “Arise!”

There was something in that face, I suppose, something in the power of that word which strengthened the faltering faith of the poor paralytic. At all events, the germ of faith was there, and the man began to exert himself; and, as he arose, the limbs gathered strength, and the current of life flowed more strongly through the veins. He arose. Then came the power to take up the bed on which he lay—a mattress, such as has often been seen, I doubt not, by those of you who have travelled in the East—to go forth through the streets to his home.

Now, my brethren, there is a lesson here of vital importance to us. The whole of our life is one gradual education. We pass through various periods ; just as a boy at school passes, if he is going on well, through different classes. The natural life and the spiritual life are equally a mystery. Both are given by God. The natural life is first seen when the child is born. The spiritual life is first seen when the regenerated child is given back to its parents at the font ; seen, I mean, by God and by the Angels. But as the bodily life must be developed by the use of the means that God has provided ; as the infant will die, unless you provide for it the food and the warmth, and the varied means by which natural life is developed and braced, so also, unless the little child given back into your arms at the font has the spiritual food and air and warmth—the varied means of grace that God has provided in the Church—that life, though created by God, must wither and die.

But when the life has been thus developed, there come, as I have said, periods of transition. They are sometimes very sudden ; just as in the natural life you sometimes leave a person for a few weeks, and you say, on returning, “The child has grown into a woman” ; or, “I left him a boy ; he is now a man.” The change has been sudden. Generally, however, it is gradual ; passing by almost imperceptible changes out of the spiritual childhood into the riper years of strong manhood.

1. The points which I wish to bring before you to-day are these :—*At almost every stage of the Christian life, the call to arise to a higher standard is preceded by a sort of paralysis.*

This paralysed man was lying there, helpless ; and then the word was spoken, “Arise !” So it is with us. We have gone on very well ; we have been good, moral,

honest people. Suddenly, we begin to fail in everything. We are inclined to give up in despair. It is the paralysis that God is allowing, to make us ready to receive the free forgiveness through JESUS CHRIST, the free mercy of God, bestowed without money and without price.

Later on in life, we prided ourselves, perhaps, on our love to others. Suddenly, we found our temper becoming bad. We were more impatient and irritable; less kind and tender-hearted. It is the paralysis that is to prepare us for seeking, not natural affection (which is a mere natural gift that we receive from our parents, in greater or less degree, some being naturally amiable, and some others the reverse) but the divine gift of charity, as portrayed by the HOLY GHOST in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians.

So all through life. If we are to be prepared for receiving Sacramental truth, there often comes such an utter impotence of will, such an inability to realize heavenly things, that we are obliged to seek more divine life; and so the man who used only to come to the holy table at Christmas or Easter is seen among the communicants, month by month, and then begins to yearn for yet more frequent celebrations. The Voice has found him paralysed, and the Incarnate God has said, "Arise!"

But when the word is spoken, faith is required. Numbers come to the point of paralysis, and remain there all their life, and pass into the other world. God only knows where they are. God is good and merciful. I do not say that they cannot be saved. But so far as the joy and peace of believing are concerned, they never knew it on earth. So far as victory over sin is concerned, so far as the glorious life that is portrayed in the Epistles is concerned, the going on from strength to strength, abounding in hope, glorifying God, letting the light

shine, winning souls for CHRIST, their experience is utterly diverse. They may be saved. GOD only knows. They may be lost. We commit them to Him, as to a merciful GOD, an all-wise FATHER. But they are paralysed, so far as we can see, in this dispensation. Everything seems in the Bible to turn upon faith.

2. This leads us on to the second point:—*How is this faith to be obtained? How did faith give strength to this man, so that he arose?*

By listening to the Word of JESUS CHRIST. There was a spark of faith, probably, before. It was the Word of GOD that kindled that spark into a burning flame. There was the germ, to begin with; the germ was developed by that one word, "Arise!" And this is what we are taught by the HOLY SPIRIT in the Epistle to the Romans. Faith, we are told, is not a mere natural confidence; that is, not the mere assent of the understanding. It is that divine gift of GOD which enables us practically to realize, as if we saw them, the things which are unseen. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is, to the higher part of our being, what the natural eye is to the body.

And "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of GOD." This is the reason why, in the Baptismal Service, people often smile as they listen to the quaint old language, but there is a deep hidden meaning underlying it—this is why the Church tells the sponsors to take care that the children hear sermons; because, in the ordinary working of GOD's Providence, faith is generated, not merely, nor generally, by reading, but by hearing; whether the Word be spoken publicly in the congregation, or privately in the vestry, or in the gathering of Christian friends assembled together to listen to the reading of the Word of the LORD.

Generally speaking, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Of course, the Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of CHRIST is God's great way of feeding the soul, and strengthening and nourishing faith. There are numberless means of grace by which faith is strengthened, but the normal way by which faith is first quickened is by hearing the Word of God. The child hears the first word, "Arise!" and it comes forward to Confirmation. The confirmed boy hears the word "Arise!" and he comes forward to Holy Communion; and so, onwards and upwards, till this life is ended.

Dear brethren, believe me, you have no idea of the possibilities of your regenerate nature.

We have seen that the miraculous is the natural, to Almighty God. We have seen that there is a continual call upon our faith. We have seen that, however great the paralysis, faith will be given, if with prayer to God we study some promise of the Bible. Mere reading the Lessons, morning and evening, however good in itself, rarely develops faith. Faith is developed by taking a single text or passage, praying over it, turning it into thanksgiving, reading it, marking it, learning it by heart, and inwardly digesting it, till we have laid hold of the particular portion of everlasting life which God intends at that time to communicate.

Just as the paralysed man laid hold of the portion of physical life which was laid up for him in JESUS CHRIST, so we receive, at different points in our spiritual education, out of the fullness of life which is laid up for us in CHRIST JESUS, the special portion of spiritual life which we need. "Out of His fullness have we all received, and grace for grace." (*S. John* i. 16.)

We receive it by believing, by taking a promise, feeding upon it, listening to it, till it has become incor-

porated with our being, and the strength has flowed down into the paralysed organs, and we can rise up in hearty willing response to the call of the Everlasting FATHER.

And so, brethren, I leave you, with that word "Arise" ringing in your ears. God alone knows the future. One thing is certain; the demand upon your energy, if you are true to your God, will never cease. Every year you will be asked by the all-loving FATHER to "arise," forgetting the things which are behind, and pressing on to the things that are before. God spoke to Israel on Sinai, and bade them forget the gentler teaching of the Patriarchal Dispensation. God spoke to His people through the Incarnate LORD, when He was on earth, and bade them "arise" and break loose from the trammels of Judaism. God speaks to us in the light of the Christian Covenant, and bids us "arise" above the level of those who lived with CHRIST when He tabernacled on earth.

As, on some clear day, we look up into that deep azure sky, and see there unfathomable depths of light, strange mystic forms, entirely unobserved by the man whose eyes are ever grovelling in the dust of the lower earth; so, as you feed on the promises of God in Holy Scripture—as you strengthen your faith by reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting God's Word—He shall speak to you such glorious words as your mind at present is powerless to realize. Every death, every sorrow, every earthly disappointment, every change in outward circumstances, every child or friend that is carried from you into the invisible Kingdom, every blessing that is showered down upon you: the happy marriage; the joy of having a soul entrusted to you, as a father or a mother, to train for heaven; if God give you many friends, or call you to go out alone, without an earthly home, with no one but CHRIST—

what strange words those seem for a Christian to use!—with no one but CHRIST for your friend and companion and father and mother and brother and sister—at every change of this mortal life you shall hear the Voice saying “Arise!”

Thank God for the past, but lie not there paralysed, dreaming of bygone years, their spiritual experiences, or their vanished joys; heaven is before thee, the prize of thy high calling! “Arise,” when the hour of death is claiming what seems the victory over your entire being; whether thou art dying calmly and quietly, or with the powers of evil shrieking in thine ear that thy GOD has forsaken thee. Beneath them all, thou shalt recognize the still small voice of Him Who spoke in that room at Capernaum, saying to thy helpless paralysed soul: “I have loved thee, and washed thee from thy sins in My Blood. Arise! Friend, come up higher.” Yes, and when CHRIST shall have been revealed in His glory, and the heavens and earth which are now shall have passed away, and the New Dispensation shall have been inaugurated, and the ransomed souls are going out with their King into the light of the New Dispensation, the Voice shall still ring on, through all the unborn ages of eternity: “Child, washed from thy sins in My Blood—child, whom I have educated on earth, arise! Arise, to know thy GOD, in the Beatific Vision.”

Thanks be to GOD that CHRIST, Who said “Arise” at Capernaum, is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever”: the same to help the little child going out to school; the same to help the boy entering for the first time on the perils of public life; the same to comfort the mourner; the same to cheer the poor lonely spirit bereft of its earthly home; the same to train the remnant of a lower dispensation, in the untold glory of the heavenly Kingdom!

III

A RIGHT CONVERSATION

"To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God."—Ps. 1. 23.

THERE is a common proverb, my brethren, that "half a loaf is better than no bread." So far as the body is concerned, the proverb is a commonplace; but so far as the soul is concerned, it is a deadly delusion. If Satan has slain his thousands by direct falsehood, he has destroyed his tens of thousands by a half-truth. The text is an illustration.

It is, of course, a duty to order our "conversation aright"—to live good, honest, straightforward lives. And, thank God, there are numbers in this congregation who are doing so; who are utterly irreproachable, so far as this world is concerned: good fathers, good mothers, good sons, good daughters, good masters, good servants; irreproachable! And yet it is perfectly possible to live in this way without ever having used the will in any definite turning to God; in any yielding up of ourselves—body, soul, and spirit—to that LORD JESUS CHRIST Whom the FATHER has sent to be our Prophet, our Priest, and our King. And so it comes to pass—we clergy see it continually—that numbers of respectable people live and die without ever having understood the *last* half of my text, without ever having seen "the salvation of God"; without ever having stirred up themselves to take hold of that

Eternal Being. With their hand they have often grasped the hand of their fellow-men ; with their heart they have come into contact with other hearts, to which they are linked by an impassioned affection, or by a deep, undemonstrative, enduring love ; with their intellect they have touched the minds of the great leaders of human thought. All this they have done, but their spirit has never touched that holy, loving Spirit of the Living God. He is alive ; He is not far from any of us ; and our spirit has the power of touching Him, as truly as mind touches mind, and heart touches heart, and hand grasps hand. But this they have never done. They have never, in any real sense of the word, known God. As civilized heathen, but as heathen weighted with all the responsibilities of baptized Christians, they go forth to stand, in all the agony of remorse, before the judgement-seat of heaven. They have been slain by the half-truth which is contained in the first half of my text : by being satisfied with ordering their "conversation aright," without ever seeing the "salvation of God."

Others, again, are destroyed by the last half of my text. "No human effort," they say, "is of any avail. I have no power to rend the cloud which hides the Saviour from me. God alone can lift up the veil. God alone can show me this great salvation. God alone can give me that joy and peace in believing. I wish I could believe that the Blood of CHRIST has washed me from my sin. I wish I could believe that CHRIST is at my side, to guide me, to carry my burdens, to take care of me and my children, my wife, my home. I would to God I could see His salvation, but God alone can show it to me. And so I wait, I humbly wait ; like the crowd at Bethesda's pool, waiting for the moving of the water.

I hope the vision will come. I hope, some day, I shall have the joy that others have. I hope, some day, I shall be able to say, like Simeon, 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace . . . for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.' Then the battle of life will have lost its awful intensity; the conflict with the world and the flesh and the devil will have become easier. And so I am tarrying the LORD's leisure. I am waiting. I am waiting for that heavenly Baptism. I am waiting to see the salvation of my God."

You see at once that these souls have failed to understand the first half of my text. "Order thy conversation aright," first of all; and then, "the salvation of God" shall be shown unto thee. Both are right, and yet both are wrong. I desire to bring the text before you this morning in its completeness. And in so doing I speak to you all: to those who are just beginning to desire to turn from a life of real wickedness; to those who have long desired to find the peace and the joy of believing; to those who, years ago, knew what pardon and peace meant, but who now feel the drawing of the invisible Spirit, lifting them up to something higher and truer, more worthy of God and His CHRIST, than their past indecision and halting between two opinions. To all of you, my brethren—and to myself also—I would send home the words of my text: "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God."

First of all, *we must begin to order our conversation aright.* And here, brethren, as in most things, we cannot do better than go back to the guiding of the old Prayer Book. You cannot have better teaching on this half of the subject than you find in that Exhortation in the Office for the Holy Communion. "The ways and means" to draw near to God is this: "First, to examine your lives and conversations by the rule of

God's commandments." And then it goes on to explain how the ordering of your conversation aright is to be done; and in tender love it says at the last, if you cannot get it clear—if you cannot get right by yourself—then remember that God has appointed His ministers for this very work, to help you in your difficulties.

In the Sermon on the Mount we find these three things noticed by our LORD: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. And in the old Catechism we find a plain summary of our duty to God and our duty to our neighbour. So, taking these as our guides, let us sit down quietly, with paper and pencil, and try to order our conversation by the rule of God's commandments.

My prayers, for instance? What time in the morning am I giving to them, and what time at night? What time do I snatch for a few moments of communion with God during the day?

My almsgiving? No one, whether Churchman or Dissenter, who has ever studied the subject and written about it, has ever said that we can be carrying out the teaching of the Bible if we are giving less to God than a tenth; putting the tenth aside as the "first-fruits" of the week, or the month, or the year, as the case may be. God gives no rule. I am laying no burden on you. I only say that you will not find a single writer of any weight who has set down God's portion as less than a tenth. And I can tell you, for your encouragement, that I have watched the result of this almsgiving in some of the poorest people that I have known, and they have never had reason to repent it.

And then, fasting? This implies all acts of self-denial, the whole restraint of the lower nature; that living by rule which all the leading physicians in London are now prescribing. They tell us that the cause of half the maladies in England is this: men have no rule as to

how much they drink, no rule as to how much they eat. They take simply what they like, and so the body is being ruined, and, of course, the soul also.

Am I, then, ordering my conversation by the rule of God's commandments? What is my rule with regard to those three things which CHRIST mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount—almsgiving, fasting, prayer.

And, then, as to my Sundays? What time does God have, quietly, alone in my own chamber, besides the public services of the Church? How often do I go to church; only for the conventional Morning Service?

Then again, as to my duty to my neighbour? What character have I with my servants or with my master? What would my parents say of me if they were obliged to speak frankly? What would my children say of me? What would my enemies—if I have any—say of me? Our enemies often exaggerate our faults, but, if we are humble, we learn from their judgements.

This is the first duty, the precept implied in my text: order thy "conversation aright."

Brethren, the Bible is full of illustrations of the blessings that come in fulfilment of the promise of my text. What of Cornelius? He knew nothing of CHRIST. He had never seen the salvation of God. But he gave alms, and he prayed; and then, God said to him, "Thy prayers and thine alms have come up for a memorial before God." Old Simeon, too—he went to church at every opportunity, day by day; and then, one day, in the Temple, God gave him the manifestation of the Saviour, and he went home singing with joy, "LORD, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace: according to Thy word. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." And Nathanael—he kept himself pure and unspotted from the world; and CHRIST met him, and

said, "Thou shalt see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

I could go on to tell you of illustrations that I myself have seen, one after another. Believe me, brethren, if a man will only sit down and see that he is right in his dealings with God, with the Church, with his family, and in his own private inner life, God Almighty will be true to His word; the promise shall be fulfilled. "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God."

But, while this is done, the other must not be left undone. There is an old German proverb—

"With one hand work, and with the other pray,
And God will bless them both, from day to day."

We have to order our "conversation aright"; but we have also to pray. No mere ordering of the "conversation aright" will ever bring down the revelation from on high that God holds in His own hand. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find"; whether it be at the beginning of the Christian life, or in those later struggles with some besetting sin which hampers you in running the race that is set before you, or at some of those critical periods when you desire to go forward, and yet seem to be always falling back. First, order the "conversation aright"; and then kneel down, at every Communion, at every opportunity for private prayer, and—with thanksgiving for the past—say, "O God reveal the CHRIST; show me this new part of Thy great salvation."

For, my brethren, "the salvation of God," of course, is JESUS CHRIST Himself. "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation!" Through JESUS CHRIST, very God and very Man, all the power and the love of the Godhead come

down to us. He is the heavenly Ladder that reaches from earth to the sky ; GOD receives us through Him, and through Him come down all the blessings from heaven into our souls.

"But," you say, "do you mean that I shall have a vision?" In certain very rare cases, I believe that, as of old, so also now, GOD does deal with souls in this direct miraculous way. But such cases, so far as my own observation has gone, are very rare. And there is a great danger of mistaking the appearances of the devil, transformed into an angel of light, for the appearances of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, or of those whom we have loved on earth.

As a general rule, the way in which GOD reveals His great salvation—at whatever stage of the Christian life—is through the Bible, quietly studied, under the teaching of the HOLY SPIRIT. We take up the Bible, and at first it looks like a blank book. We get nothing out of it. The time that we can give, that day, passes in a useless reverie. Perhaps the same thing occurs again and again. But we persevere ; we look into the Bible ; with the help, it may be, of some simple guide-book, we find out a few texts in the Bible. And the HOLY GHOST, Who loves to take of the things of CHRIST and show them to us, will show to us, out of the Bible, according to our need, CHRIST as the Saviour from guilt, or CHRIST as the Conqueror of sin and death, or CHRIST as the Guide of our life, or CHRIST as our Comforter in sorrow, or CHRIST as the once-offered Sacrifice that took away the guilt of the world.

Thus, my brethren, you see the two half-truths joined into one. We order our "conversation aright." We pray for the revelation of CHRIST. And so, while with one hand we work, and with the other pray, GOD blesses both of them, from day to day.

One thing in conclusion. Beware of another half-truth. You say, "All this is true"; for when you listen to such plain words as I am speaking this morning, with the Bible to guide you, you know that they are true. And so you say, "Yes, these things are true; but they take time. It cannot be done in a moment. I cannot alter the whole of my manner of living; I cannot alter everything, reduce my work, and find time for prayer or for whatever God is guiding me to do, all at once. I cannot even break off the link which binds me to that degrading sin in a moment. All around me I am fettered; it takes time. By degrees, yes, by degrees, I will order my 'conversation aright'; and then, I hope, in time, I shall see the 'salvation of God.'"

Now, brethren, take hold of these few last words. God is eternal. With God, past and future are all present. When we lay before Him our resolve, whether we are at the lowest or the highest step of the ladder, that we will order our "conversation aright," then, I say, in God's sight it is already done.

God has seen the unuttered heart's intent. God has seen you using your will in that act of decision. It is done! It is written in God's great Book. You can go forth with all the confidence of the man who has had the hand of God laid on him, as Daniel had, to do whatever God tells you to do, and to witness for God wherever He would have you witness. You remember how the angel told the prophet that "from the first day" when he set himself to understand what God wished—from that day—his words were heard. (*Daniel* x. 12.) Half the best characters that I know, in earthly matters, are ruined by procrastination. It will never be easier than it is now. There is pardon, now. "Now is the day of salvation."

If I am speaking to any who feel that the LORD is calling them to some great venture of faith, to some hard and noble service ; if you feel that you have a mission to go out as God's pioneers in this great wilderness ; my brother, my sister, now, for thee—laid up in CHRIST, to be claimed by faith, out of His fullness, in time of need—there is that strange, deep unextinguishable energy which comes down from GOD, “the FATHER of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

You desire to be claimed entirely by GOD. You wish to have done with all niggardly calculations as to how much of this world's popularity, how much of this world's success, how much of anything that is of the earth, earthy, you can keep ! You wish to be laid hold of by the Infinite and Eternal GOD ; to be gathered up, as it were, into the hollow of His hand ; and then to go out, utterly surrendered, as a fiery arrow, to the utmost parts of the wickedness and the sin of the world with which you are brought in contact.

My brother, order thy “conversation aright,” now ; pray with faith, now ; and thou shalt see the “salvation of GOD.”

IV

SINGLENESSE OF AIM

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended : but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—PHIL. iii. 13, 14.

SUCH is our motto, in words all are willing to accept. The singleness of aim it enforces is a foundation principle of Christianity. All are ready to admit that if religion is of any value at all—if there be any meaning in those words which pass so lightly from our lips : GOD ; GOD's law ; GOD's all-seeing eye ; death ; judgement to come—then the glory of GOD ought to be made the *one* absorbing object of our life. All, too, will acknowledge that if the secret of success in earthly matters be the entire devotion to one object, it is not likely that the highest good can be obtained with less singleness of aim than that which is demanded of the merchant in his counting-house or the student in his closet. Yet, though this be true—although the judgement may be convinced while we are sitting in this house of GOD—before another week, nay, before another day has passed, Satan will have whispered in your hearts that subtle suggestion by which souls in every age have been ensnared and destroyed. "It is not possible," you will feel ; "it is all very well for an Apostle, but *we* cannot be always thinking of GOD. One must work with his hands, and another with his mind,

and all in some shape or other must fight the battle of life in the world. However often and however loudly the great funeral knell may sound in our ears, 'the fashion of this world passeth away.' So long as the world has not passed away, so long as we live under these conditions, it is not practicable to carry out the teaching of the text, 'This one thing I do.'

Let me endeavour, then, to mark out a way by which all, through the help of the HOLY SPIRIT, can walk in the path which was trodden by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and may God the HOLY GHOST bless the word for JESUS' sake. Let us consider for a moment the passage before us. The Apostle had been baptized—so have we. The Apostle had learnt his own utter unworthiness. "I am the chief of sinners," he writes to Timothy in one of his last epistles. He had been taught the simple facts of the Gospel, which have been so often declared to you—that his debt had been paid : that the Prince of Peace, as his representative, had borne his sins, and set him free from the penalty which those sins had incurred. And he acted on the knowledge of that Atonement.

Have we taken this first step, whatever our past history has been ? Though our sins have been "as scarlet," GOD meets us with the tenderness of an Almighty FATHER ; though we are a great way off, He comes to meet us with compassion, and welcomes us with words of love. "I will blot out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." (*Isa. xlv. 22.*) Until we have submitted ourselves to this loving Will of God ; until we are ready, simply trusting in His Word, to receive the message of mercy which He has sent us ; until we have ceased to depend on our own progress, our own sorrow for sin, or our own efforts after a better life—until, I say, we have thus ceased from looking to self, we are just fighting in our pride against the All-merciful God.

But when, like S. Paul, we have taken the first step, when we have confessed our guilt, and simply trusted ourselves to Him Whose Blood cleanses from all sin ; then it is possible for all, whether old or young, rich or poor, by the help of the HOLY GHOST, honestly to adopt the principle of the text as their motto.

How shall this be done ? The same Apostle shall give the answer in the verses which follow the text. He knew that CHRIST was alive : he knew that he belonged to CHRIST : his one ruling idea was to do everything as in the Presence of the LORD JESUS, seeking only the approval of Him by Whom he had been redeemed ; striving to fix his mind on that heavenly Kingdom where CHRIST had gone to prepare a place for him. In other words, obedience to CHRIST was the motive of his entire life.

Why is it impossible for us, dear brethren, to imitate His example in this respect ? Can we not so order our life that, however varied our occupations, however urgent their claims upon our time, obedience to CHRIST shall be its motive power ?

Take an earthly illustration—the case of a man who loves his family—he is anxious to provide for them, and devotes his whole mind to this end. Now, it is quite possible that his entire attention may be absorbed in the means by which his object shall be attained. He would be wronging his employer if he did not devote all his energies to the work he has undertaken ; and for hours together it may be impossible for him to cast even a passing thought upon his children. Nay, further, some recreation is necessary for the benefit of his health, and if that recreation is to be of any real service to his wearied brain, he must throw himself heartily into its enjoyment. Yet who would mistake for a single moment the motive that actuates the man's life ? Would he not be perfectly

justified in maintaining before all the world : "This one thing I do ; I am devoted to my family, and my one object is to make provision for those entrusted to my care."

Why, then, I ask, may not the same principle be applied to heavenly matters ? Can we not, at all events, understand the way in which it can be so applied ? We begin, then, by reminding ourselves that our LORD is alive ; that He knows our every thought and word and deed, and we make up our mind that the chief object of our life is to try and do His Will on earth as it is done in heaven. He has given us a certain number of hours in every day. How does He wish them to be spent ? How much time is it absolutely necessary for us to devote to rest, to recreation, to earthly business ? What is the largest amount that we can save for our Sovereign LORD ?—save for the strengthening of our souls, and of the cause for which His Blood was shed ? Again, can we not, in nine cases out of ten, so arrange our day beforehand, with its duties and its pleasures, as to set apart a certain time for quiet prayer and Bible-study—for communion with our God ? To-morrow we may be going to work early and returning late ; let us consider when we can find time for devotion. Or, we may be going on a journey, and the train starts at such an hour. What arrangement must we make to secure a quiet time for God ? Again, how much of our income—our wages, our money, in whatever way received—can we set apart for Him ? How much did the Jews devote to Jehovah ? What proportion have other Christians thought right to consecrate to God ? Let us pause before we touch our money to think of our King ; to realize the Presence of Him Who for us men and for our salvation left all the joys of heaven for the lowly manger at Bethlehem. Whatever our answer may be, let us "seek first the

Kingdom of God," laying aside the first-fruits for Him. Then as to our pleasures. How can we best fulfil the Will of our Divine Master with regard to them? Some places are in a special manner marked with the sign of Antichrist. Into these haunts of Satan we will never enter—so help us GOD. But there are other considerations to be taken into account. We have old friends, it may be, whose very friendship weakens our spiritual life, or we frequent pleasant country houses where the LORD into Whom we have been baptized is continually dishonoured.

Here, again, our course is clear—either to go forth in the true martyr-spirit and bear witness for our King, at whatever cost of popularity or ease; or, if too weak for such a conflict, sacrificing the dear friend and the agreeable society for the sake of Him Who has said, "If thy right hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off and cast it from thee."

Let us resolve in this spirit to break loose from old ideas and old prejudices, to act less on the impulse of the moment, and re-arrange our life more in obedience to His Will. Let us ask ourselves, How best can I concentrate my energies upon that part of the battlefield where CHRIST has willed that I should wage the great warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil? Let us have done for ever with the old wavering, desultory life which makes the majority of professing Christians compare so unfavourably with the persevering man of the world, and brings scorn on the name we bear. Let us rise to a truer sense of the dignity of our life, the nobility of our "high calling of God"—"a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people." (1 *S. Pet.* ii. 9.)

I grant that it is no easy task to which we are called. Again and again, as the shades of evening fall around us,

we shall have need to go back to the Saviour for pardon; again and again we shall have cause to acknowledge that, even if religious work has occupied our day, scarcely one single act has been truly done for CHRIST. Still, whatever it costs us, though we be met by sneers and taunts, or tempted in soft, soothing whispers by some even of those called by the Name of CHRIST, to serve GOD if we will, but to live as others live, to beware of enthusiasm, and cast aside the burden of the Cross, and so lower our standard—still let us persevere. “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

The victors in GOD’s great army are not the angels, who have never fallen, but Moses and Elijah, David and Peter, men of like passions with ourselves, who, humbled to the dust by countless sins and failures, have risen again to wage the conflict with unflinching courage and untiring zeal. So shall it be with us. Forgetting those things which are behind, forgetting even past sins—except to learn from them humility, forbearance, and watchfulness—and reaching forward to new victories over evil, new sacrifices for CHRIST, we shall be enabled to carry out the Apostle’s teaching in the text. We shall be enabled to adapt to the manifold varieties of outward circumstances by which we are surrounded the one principle of the regenerate life. Day by day the maid at her household duties, the carpenter in his shop, the young girl in the midst of her pleasures, and the youth at his sports, can, no less than the priest on his knees at the altar, so make GOD’s glory the ruling motive of their lives as to echo in deepest sincerity the Apostle’s declaration, “This *one* thing I do, . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS.”

V

THE ATONEMENT

"The Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."—GAL. ii. 20.

THE Atonement of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, my brethren, is the great truth upon which the mind and the heart of every believer in Western Christendom are this week¹ centred. It is in order to give prominence to this great truth that the Church at this season invites us, not only in our private meditations, but in God's most holy house, to listen day by day to the story of the Cross, the history of the death of JESUS CHRIST.

Let us, first of all, clearly see what this great doctrine is, as expressed to us in the Bible, and brought home to us in the language of our Prayer Book.

In the Communion Office we are told that "Almighty God, our heavenly FATHER, of His tender mercy gave His only SON JESUS CHRIST to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption; Who made there (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world."

There are four points which it is important to consider, in connection with the great doctrine thus unfolded to us:—

I. The FATHER, our heavenly FATHER, the FATHER

¹ Holy Week.

of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, of His tender mercy so loved the world as to give His only SON, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish. The FATHER spared not His own Child, but freely gave Him up. Half the difficulties by which intelligent men are perplexed about the Atonement arises from the ignoring of this fact, that the FATHER loved the world, and sent His SON to be the propitiation for our sins. The love of the FATHER is the fountain of all redemption.

2. It must be borne in mind that He by Whom the redemption was accomplished, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, is very GOD, one with the FATHER from all eternity. As Abraham and Isaac went up that mount of sacrifice, "both of them together"—twice the words are repeated in the twenty-second chapter of Genesis—as that father and child went up together, with no other mind than this, to do the Will of the Eternal GOD; so He Who worked out on Calvary our everlasting redemption was very GOD, one with the FATHER. "Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O GOD. I am content to do it." It was not an iron hand crushing Him. "Therefore doth My FATHER love Me, because I lay down my life. No man taketh it from Me; I lay it down of Myself." "I lay it down." The SON loved the world. The SON freely, in harmony with the FATHER's mind, gave Himself up for the world's redemption.

3. We must never forget that, by the very force of the language which is employed, we are dealing with a mystery. When once we use such words as GOD uses for us in last Sunday's Epistle, when once we speak of CHRIST, through the Eternal Spirit, working out an eternal redemption, we have, by the very force of language, passed out of the region which the finite mind of man is able to grasp. You cannot—all the wisdom of the universe concentrated into one man could not—give

a logical definition of the word *eternal*. Therefore everything done by an Eternal Being is in itself of the nature of a mystery, i.e., it is something which we only know so far as because it has been revealed to us by GOD.

4. In order that we may be delivered from the dangerous delusion of exalting the spiritual part of man at the expense of the natural—lest we should, in our zeal for the spiritual side of God's Kingdom, be led to disparage the intellectual faculties with which GOD has endowed us—it is important that we should remember that, mysterious though it be, though no illustration, however useful, can explain, but only help us faintly to lay hold of, the truth that GOD has revealed ; still, when it has been revealed, it is in entire harmony with man's reason.

I hope, if GOD spare me, after Easter, to work out this thought more fully. At present I would only ask you to consider whether the redemption of another life, by blood, is not the law upon which the whole of this lower earth is built up ? Is it not by the soldier's blood, shed ungrudgingly on the battlefield, that the national life and the national freedom of the country are maintained ? Has not England, over and over again, been redeemed by the blood of her children ? While the little child is free to go out into the bright sunshine, and listen to the music of the birds, and gather each flower at its feet, what is the father doing ? Is he not spending long weary days in the toilsome city life, weary hours with the midnight oil, that his child may be reared, trained, educated, spared all anxiety ? Was it not at the price of your mother's pain that your very life was given ? Is it not by the self-sacrifice of the mother, year after year, that the children grow up to the fullness of life ? Is not redemption by death the law upon which all that is true and good and real in the natural life of a country or an individual is based ?

GOD grant that England may never lose sight of that law ! GOD grant that the day may never come when England shall shrink from sacrificing her best, her very life-blood, to maintain the heritage and to fulfil the mission which GOD has entrusted to her !

I repeat, GOD gave His SON, JESUS gave up Himself. It is a mystery, but a mystery which, now that GOD has in a sense revealed it, is in harmony with the entire law of our being. "Almighty GOD, our heavenly FATHER, of His tender mercy gave His only SON JESUS CHRIST to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption." JESUS CHRIST, "by His one oblation of Himself once offered," made "a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world."

How does this apply to you and me ?

1. You observe here that *the great sacrifice of our Lord* which we are now commemorating, which GOD will bring before us in every chapter of every Gospel during the ensuing week—*was complete : for all sin, for all men*. Therefore there is nothing to be added to it. Nothing that you or I can bring—no improvement in our prayers, no improvement in our life, no sorrow for sin—nothing that we can bring can add to it. Our work is simply to receive as a free gift what GOD has freely given, what JESUS CHRIST has purchased for us by His Blood.

Here I ask the attention of those who are alienated at once by these words. If there be one thing that man hates more than another, it is to humble himself and say to GOD, "I can do nothing. I cannot feel anything. I can only receive that which nineteen hundred years ago was wrought out for me."

Let me, then, make clear what I mean. After we have honoured GOD and JESUS CHRIST by saying, "O

GOD, I see now that I can never undo that one wicked thought ; I see now that if I lived for a million years all my life would belong to Thee ; and therefore nothing in the future can undo the past, any more than not going into debt to-morrow to pay the debts of last week." When once we have grasped that, and humbly uttered it on our knees to GOD, and have received this Atonement, then all our service is acceptable to GOD. Before that, if we were doing it deliberately, GOD spurned us : as you or I would spurn anybody who thought to please us by being ungrateful or unkind to our child, or detracting from the credit of our child. If we go to GOD and say, "O GOD, when I am better, when I have done this and felt this and said this, then I will believe," we are, in other words, saying to GOD, "I put your CHRIST aside ; He was not sufficient ; when He said, 'It is finished,' it was a lie ; it was not complete, it was not enough. Therefore, I will trust to myself, with enough of CHRIST, at the end, to pass me through into heaven." But afterwards, all the love, all the life given up, going everywhere with glad tidings of great joy, thankful to GOD for what He has given to our own souls, unable to keep it back, unable to let others die without knowing how good GOD is, how complete was the Atonement, what peace came to our souls when, like little children, we received it ; with all this GOD is then well pleased.

But now, this week, any one who is not at peace, any one who is not ready to die, what is he to do ? Take a text of the Bible. Take the words from our Prayer Book that I have repeated this morning about the "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." Take the thought with you as you go from place to place. When you get five minutes alone at any time think of it again.

Kneel down. Think simply, "God says that my past is buried. God tells me that I may believe in Jesus CHRIST for complete forgiveness. LORD, help me." We have not to ask for a new thing, God has nothing new to give. When He has given His SON to die He can give no more. We have only to pray, "Open my eyes to see the things which, nineteen hundred years ago, were freely given by God." We feel, it may be, like a stone. We cannot pray. We can hardly believe that there is a God. We seem to have no religion at all. "Nothing," literally, "nothing in my hand I bring." We simply lie there, saying over and over, "O LORD, open my eyes."

And then—thank God, I have seen it in hundreds of cases—sometimes in a moment, with a burst of joy that has almost overpowered the person; sometimes, and more generally, calmly, quietly, still and silent as the chamber of death or the moment after receiving Holy Communion, the eyes are opened. The eyes are opened, that is all; we see the truth which God has revealed, that "Almighty God of His tender mercy gave His only SON to suffer death upon the Cross for our redemption; Who made there (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world." It is complete, therefore nothing can be added to it. It has only to be received.

2. *There is no limit to its efficacy. As long as we desire to receive this gift, there is the gift for us.*

As long as the power is left us of giving up our will to JESUS CHRIST and receiving that salvation, there it is. If you go to the chamber of death itself, and find your patient with enough power of mind left in him by God to understand what you say, and enough grace left in him by God to believe and to give himself up to Jesus

CHRIST, then the words that I have quoted may be used for that soul. JESUS CHRIST has "made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world." "Behold the Lamb of GOD, which taketh away the sin of the world ! "

I do not, however, on this account, encourage any soul to go spending all the strength of his life in work, in money-making, in earning earthly popularity ; to fritter away life in the endless round of harmless nothings which are the curse of London society. I do not, I dare not, limit God's grace. The Apostle Paul was obliged, by the constraining Spirit of GOD, to put out this truth so fully and clearly, that the worldly people, the people who were so busy that they had no time for GOD, said, "I can go on in sin, that grace may abound. I can go on, and make my money and start my children in life, and make everything prosper in this life. I can have all my pleasure, I can enjoy myself for the present. O blessed Gospel, glad tidings indeed ! I can continue to live as I like, and then, at the last, God will have mercy on me, because I believe—yes, for I am not an infidel—I believe in JESUS CHRIST."

The Apostle had to deal with such as these. And yet he did not limit the grace of GOD. He went on preaching the Gospel of the grace of GOD, though the people said, "We will continue in sin, that grace may abound." GOD forbid that you, my own people, you whom I love as far as my selfish heart can love anything on earth, should be like them. GOD forbid that I should encourage you to do that.

1. First of all, it is hateful ; hateful to all the chivalry, to all the noblest instincts of our nature. We see Him with those wounded hands and that pierced side ; we hear Him cry in His agony, "My FATHER, if it be

possible, let this cup pass from Me"; we see His eye of love looking down upon us from heaven. He asks us to love Him, to give up our life to Him, whatever our outward position may be; not shrinking from our ordinary duties, but going about with our heart so full of love that nobody can be with us, nobody can speak to us, without seeing that we have come out from the Presence of One Whom we love and in Whom we believe. He says to us, He says to us again to-day, "I love you, and I will fill you with My Spirit; so that, whether you are in Parliament, whether you live in the country house, whether you have to work all day in the city, or to work in the kitchen as a servant, you shall be so full of love to Me, that however little you may open your lips, the power will go out, because your life is really given up to Me Who loved you and died for you." O how ungrateful, how contemptible to look up to that CHRIST, to hear Him thus speaking to us, and then, because He does not strike us dead at once, to answer, "O CHRIST, keep it all for me; keep it till I am dying; keep it till I have nothing more to offer; keep it till I have made my money; keep it till I have had all my pleasure; and then come to me, at the last, to wash out my sins in Thy Blood, and let my friends rejoice that I have gone to Paradise."

2. I would not, and I durst not, encourage you to reject the love of CHRIST, for it is not merely hateful, it is dangerous. There is no limit to the Atonement, but in ninety-nine out of a hundred whom, as a clergyman, I have had to visit, there has not been the power to take in, intelligently, what I have had to teach. Those who had lived merely as respectable Israelites, perfect under the Old Testament Dispensation, have lived trampling under foot the Blood of CHRIST, never con-

strained by His love to let their light shine, have died as they have lived, irreproachable sons of Israel, civilized heathen, on a level with Socrates! As a general rule, the matter is settled, long before these last hours arrive.

It has been my lot to enter a sick room—the room of an aged saint. And what is the state of things I find? Like the Apostle John in the Revelation, she has to lie dead at the feet of CHRIST. All that she can bear is a little text, to remind her of that which has helped her through the preceding life. It would have been dangerous for her to have waited to find the peace of believing till this hour. No power on earth could give to the mind the force, or give to the poor failing body the strength to receive more than a single text.

And I have had to be in another sick room, that of one only seventeen years of age. To say to that child more than one verse of a hymn would be to risk her life. To allow her to say her daily prayers would be to ruin all that the doctors, depending on the Church's prayers, are trying to accomplish. Her father's order even was this: "No prayers; say the Name of JESUS." If that child had not known what JESUS CHRIST's Blood had done for sinners, if that child had to learn to-day the glad tidings of great joy that I am now proclaiming in S. Peter's, what value every priest in England, what value every intercession of all the saints on earth and in Paradise?

The body, the mind, the spirit—your body, soul, and spirit; my body, soul, and spirit—are so bound up together, that before next Sunday you may be lying in a state where not one word will be allowed to enter into your mind, not one cry allowed to pass from your lips. It is hateful to throw CHRIST's love away. It is dangerous.

How shall we truly apply this doctrine to ourselves?

We are continually to be looking out of ourselves up to God, Whose love unmerited, large, liberal, abundant, is for ever there: first to give us the foundation of peace by the assurance of our entire absolution, altogether irrespective of the sins which we have committed; and then again and again to restore to us, at each of our repentances, with that same large, liberal love, again and again that same sense of peace. We have got to believe that, not to be for ever worrying ourselves, not to be for ever miserably anxious. Rather, again and again simply coming back to confess our sins, with an absolute unsparing reality, but in proportion to the unsparing reality and utter humility and utter self-abasement with which we confess ourselves, to believe indeed that God is to His Word in CHRIST, "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God puts us all on the same level, and, destroying pride out of the heart of all of us, gives to all of us the same fundamental and divine hope. God, without any question as to what we have done, or how we have behaved, has manifested Himself to us in the Sacrifice of His Son, has offered to us the simple largeness of His divine offer of forgiveness, and demands of us this only, that, knowing what we are, and what God is, we take God at His Word. And henceforth we are free men and women, emancipated simply by the largeness of that Word of pure and unmerited forgiveness, which sends us forth into the world with hope renewed and broken spirits revived; because back behind all, and through all, there is that God of power, making to us that offer of superabundant love, and able, we are sure, because He is God, to be true to all that He has promised.

O my Saviour, I believe that Thou hast died for my sins, and that Thou art alive, and that Thou lovest me, and that Thou art always ready to help me. Thou knowest what Thou dost wish me this day to do, or to endure for Thee. Grant that, by the HOLY SPIRIT, I may see Thy Will in all things, great and small, and be able to do and to endure each detail for Thy glory, Who livest and reignest with the FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT, one God, world without end. Amen.

VI

INDIVIDUAL CARE

"I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father."—S. JOHN X. 14, 15.

Or, as it should be translated :

"I am the Good Shepherd, and I know My sheep, and am known of Mine ; even as the Father knoweth Me, and as I know the Father."

THE idea which our Blessed LORD desires to convey being this : that He has for His sheep that knowledge, that same personal, individual, loving knowledge and care, which the FATHER has for the SON, and the SON has for the Everlasting FATHER. "I know My sheep, and am known of Mine ; even as the FATHER knoweth Me, and as I know the FATHER."

"I know My sheep." Few men, I think, must have had more reason to thank Almighty GOD that these words were ever spoken than S. Peter. What a deep pathos there is in the last words of that Epistle for the second Sunday after Easter, when we remember by whom the sentence was first written : "Ye were as sheep going astray ; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." Verily the Apostle Peter had learned, as few men have had power to learn, the tender personal care of that Divine Shepherd. He had in very deed been a sheep going astray, far, far away into the dark mountains. He had been brought

back again by the Good Shepherd and Bishop of his soul.

The transformation of the character of the Apostle Peter has been the subject of many a sermon in well-nigh every congregation. How successfully was the great work of education wrought in his heart by the indwelling Spirit under the personal care of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, is now almost a commonplace : how that impulsive fisherman, that proud, self-seeking man, was transformed into the humble, submissive, lion-hearted Peter ; how the man, who was at the beginning always thinking how much he could receive from God, ended at last only with the prayer that all his entire being might be laid at the feet of the Crucified ; how the man, who in early life desired always to be the first of the little band of disciples, ended in his dying hours by asking only this last favour from those by whom he was to be crucified, that he might not die in so noble a position as CHRIST, the King, had died—"Let my cross be inverted, let me die with my head downwards, for I am not worthy to be called an Apostle of the LORD JESUS CHRIST." I say the success of the education is a marked matter of history. I desire rather this morning to point out to you some of the ways by which the great Master, JESUS CHRIST, wrought out in His believing disciple this transformation.

"I know My sheep." The LORD JESUS CHRIST, by that strange union of Divinity with humanity, has the power to feel for thousands—for all, in fact, who will not reject His love—that individual personal care, that tender separating kind of love, which we, with our limited capacity, can only feel and only exercise towards the few, perhaps the one or two, upon whom our affection is specially centred. For every human being ; for the whole company of the baptized ; or, to bring

it nearer home, for every soul in this church, JESUS CHRIST, by the power of His Godhead, can feel that intense personal individualizing love, can exercise that tender individual personal care, which you or I (to repeat the words) can only feel or exercise on the one or two to whom we are specially linked.

Now, it is intensely interesting for those who have minds given them by Almighty God, to take one after another all the great characters in the New Testament, and to see how the general teaching and the general actions of the LORD JESUS CHRIST must have been an indirect education for each one of those men—how different chapters in our LORD's teaching must have affected in different ways men with the diverse characters, for instance, of S. John, S. James, and S. Thomas.

This, however, would take longer time than custom allows for the morning sermon. I can only, as it were, in the most superficial manner point out to you those incidents in our Blessed LORD's life, those special words of His, which we know were intended to influence S. Peter, and which drew out from the great Apostle certain changes of his character, certain responses from his heart of trust and love.

1. First of all, then, whenever the Holy One of God is passing by, whenever the miraculous draft of oil is to be communicated to a human soul, *the vessel must first be emptied*. "GOD giveth grace to the humble."

So we find our LORD, as soon as ever He was sure that the Apostle Peter was surrendered to Him, as soon as ever that heart was given into the school of the Divine Master, we find Him at once beginning to humble that proud, self-willed man. There is, first of all, the miraculous draught of fishes, which wrung from the Apostle what I may call a general confession,

just like the passionate vague generalities that come forth from an awakened spirit in the earlier hours of its conversion, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD." Then afterwards came the teaching on the stormy waves of that Lake of Gennesaret, when the boisterous wind soon dashed away the new-born courage of the Apostle, and, sinking ignominiously into the water, he who desired to be foremost of all and to set an example to the world of unwavering confidence, cried with anxious fear, "LORD, save me; I perish." And then came—still carrying on the great work of humbling and breaking down of the proud spirit—then came the open rebuke, which must have stung a man with a nature like S. Peter, when he was brought out into the face of all the Apostles, and told by the Divine Master, "Get thee behind me, thou devil incarnate, get thee behind me, Satan: thou art not a rock upon which I can build a Church, thou art a wretched stumbling-stone (for that is the literal translation of the word), thou art a miserable stumbling-stone; instead of standing upon thee, thou wouldst make Me stumble over thee; thou art an offence unto Me, with thy wretched worldly sentimentalism, bidding Me avoid the Cross and turn away from the rough and narrow road in which My FATHER wills that I should walk: get thee behind Me!"

Then, without giving further instances, when the LORD, Who sits as the refiner of silver—sits, that is, to watch, that the fire should not be too strong for any of us, Who does not deal with us as many a human pastor deals in his ignorance, giving at the very beginning of the soul's life the teaching for which it will only be prepared ten years hence—when CHRIST saw that S. Peter had faith enough to bear it, when He saw that the man knew enough of the everlasting Kingdom

to rise up from his fall, then CHRIST allowed his pride to be once and for ever crushed, by the most tremendous fall that is ever recorded in Holy Scripture. This man, this chief of the Apostles, this leader of humanity forsooth, curses, blasphemes, lies ; is frightened at what a maid-servant might say, forgets the love that had been shown him by JESUS of Nazareth ; false to GOD, false to man, before the cock crew Peter denies the LORD by Whom he had been redeemed.

There we will leave that branch of the subject. We leave S. Peter crushed ; we leave the vessel emptied by the almighty power of GOD the HOLY GHOST.

2. Secondly, the work of education would have been miserably incomplete if nothing had been taught the Apostle but this, that he was a poor, weak, helpless sinner. Numbers of us have learned that, thank God for the knowledge ; it is the beginning of the Christian life, the fear of the LORD. "I have erred and strayed from Thy ways like a sheep that is lost."

But there was a second truth. "*Lift up your hearts*" is the keynote of the Church, and it is the keynote of the Bible. The Apostle Peter was to be taught by the LORD JESUS CHRIST the glory of that spiritual Kingdom into which he had been admitted by companionship with JESUS CHRIST. And so, in following through the life of the Apostle, you see our Blesssd LORD unfolding to him one after another all the great verities of the Faith, through which the Church leads you year after year in the wondrous cycle of her holy seasons.

For example—for here again I am obliged to hurry on—for example, what a teaching of the world to come and the communion of saints and the resurrection of the body was there in that chamber of death, where S. Peter was specially chosen to hear the mystic words spoken by Him Who is the Resurrection and the Life, to

watch the colour return to that pale face, to see the maiden that was dead rise up and eat.

What a mighty teaching, also, in the great Transfiguration scene, when Moses and Elias appeared and the glory of the invisible Kingdom was shadowed forth in the very outward appearance of the Saviour to Whom his life had been devoted. Follow out the thought, and you will see revelations of glory making such an impression upon the Apostle's mind, that in his Epistle he refers to it, "that excellent glory," that abounding majesty, the reflection of which seemed never to pass away from the world in which he lived, and moved, and had his being, so that ever after he seemed to be like a man who lived on earth yet ever had the light of heaven shining around him.

3. But even this second great division of his education would have been incomplete if there had not been something more. The glory of God and the weakness of humanity are two grand truths, but the link was required—the link by which the one was to be united with the other.

S. Peter was to be taught by a long and gradual education that all the glory of the invisible world, all the majesty of the Resurrection Kingdom, all the beauty of the Mount of Transfiguration, was for him; that he, the poor wandering sheep who had strayed away, was not merely to be brought back to the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul, but was to be lifted, as it were, on angels' wings to be the companion of the redeemed and ransomed ones in Paradise, to be the brother of the angels, to touch in the glorious Kingdom the very hands of the Incarnate God.

Observe how this was done: it is an old story to remind you of those touching incidents—how the first message after the Resurrection was to S. Peter, to Peter

who sinned worse than any disciple except Judas. "Go and tell My disciples, and Peter." It is so touching—the silence as to what passed in that first interview. We are told what our LORD said to Mary Magdalene : we are told something of His conversation with the other disciples ; but no ear heard, no pen recorded what passed in the first interview between JESUS CHRIST, the risen LORD, and his repentant disciple, S. Peter. Oh, what a store of divine love, of personal, tender, individualizing compassion, was received by the Apostle in that silent hour. So it had been all through his life. Even when he failed most thoroughly, the LORD ever reminded him, "Thou shalt be a fisher of men ; wicked though thou art, fear not, I will strengthen thee ; I will uphold thee ; I will guide thee with Mine eye ; be not afraid ; be of good cheer ; it is I. O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Is it too fanciful to imagine that this truth of the personal, individual care of the LORD JESUS CHRIST for each one of His disciples was shadowed forth in that miracle of the tribute money, and the second of the miraculous draughts of fishes ? Would He not say to S. Peter, "If I know each fish that swims in that lake, so that I can tell you precisely where that tribute money shall be found : if I know one by one the whole number that have been gathered in by that miraculous draught, so that I count them, one hundred and fifty and three, must not thou believe, O Simon Bar-jona, that thou art of more value than the fish of the sea, and that I have numbered the hairs of thy head, and that I have called thee by a separate individualizing name ; so that thou shalt not be merely one of the disciples, one of the great company of the saved, but be known in Paradise and heaven as one separate soul, trained and educated for the kingdom of My glory?"

And there is just one more striking passage that must not be passed over. There came to S. Peter, about the earlier part, or towards the middle of his life, one of the turning-points that are coming now to thousands of Englishmen. He believed in JESUS CHRIST; he acknowledged himself a sinner; he surrendered his being to that great LORD to Whom his heart was devoted, and then came some deeper teaching about CHRIST giving His flesh to His disciples to eat. We find it in that sixth chapter of S. John, where the LORD told the Apostles that He came not merely to be the Bread of Life, but to give Himself to them that they might feed upon Him: that He came not merely to be the living LORD, but to pour supernatural life into their weak and tempted natures, so that those who ate Him should live by Him. In that mysterious teaching of the sixth chapter of S. John, our LORD shadowed forth the communication of actual life and spiritual strength by the very Body and Blood of Himself, given after a heavenly and supernatural manner; not in the earthly way, for the bread and the wine, of course, remain unchanged and unaltered; but, as the old Catechism says, there is given inwardly in a heavenly and a spiritual manner (we learnt it as children if we would only remember it): "the Body and Blood of CHRIST, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the LORD's Supper."

That was a turning-point to S. Peter. Numbers of disciples who had believed, who had acknowledged their sin, went away, and never came near CHRIST any more: just as the sacramental teaching of the Prayer Book drives hundreds away, who yielded themselves up to a certain point to JESUS CHRIST. But the characteristic of S. Peter, in spite of all his utter weakness, was this—he could not, he would not, go away from JESUS CHRIST.

Whatever the LORD taught him, he tried to understand : whatever the LORD told him to do, he prayed and he struggled and repented till it was done. So while numbers went away, he remained. Then in the night when the Last Supper was appointed, the light broke on his heart, and he saw that that LORD, Who had come on earth to redeem him, would live to communicate to him that divine and supernatural life by which he was to be invigorated and strengthened. And so the great work of education was, in a measure at any rate, complete. He had learned that he was weak. He had learned that God was strong. He had learned that the personal individual care of the LORD JESUS CHRIST would so link his weakness with the Omnipotence of the Godhead, that he should no longer be Peter the weak, timid, wavering disciple, but the lion-hearted Apostle, going forth, conquering and to conquer, to the utmost parts of the earth.

Thus, my brethren, I trust I have given to you at least some suggestions for thought in your Sunday Bible-reading. Two practical considerations alone remain.

1. First of all, if it be true—and the whole Bible tells us it is true—if it be true that our LORD JESUS CHRIST has for you and for me that personal love which separates us off from the other one hundred and fifty-two—that knowledge of us which He Himself compares to that knowledge of the Eastern shepherd who calls his sheep by name, and has a separate name for each—is there not an intense solemnity added to our lives ? I ask your attention here. I am not speaking of great sinners—what are called gross sinners—at all. If you ever loved any one in your life with a mere natural human love, how could that person have grieved and pained you most ? Would it not have been in this way : that while you were doing all you could for

him, while your heart was full of deep self-sacrificing affection, while you were thinking of him continually, he did not care about you, he did not remember you, he regarded your wishes as almost a matter of indifference? Would that not pain you more than even an open sin, than even some grievous fall in the child, or the husband, or the wife, or whoever it might be? Would not, in proportion to the greatness of your love, be the intensity of your pain when that love was slighted or rejected?

Now, dear brethren, I desire to speak to you in all calmness. Do not be prejudiced. In God's Name, Who has called you to a glorious life, do not take for granted that everything which is said to-day is exaggerated. You believe (as much as I believe) that our LORD is alive; you believe that He knows you, and that He thinks about you; and you believe that human love is given you as a faint shadow of His divine affection for each of us. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST has given to us great ability, perhaps, commanding influence, and a larger fortune ten times over than our parents ever enjoyed. He has given us at the same time Africa and India, only wanting a large outlay of money to be evangelized and brought almost as a nation to the foot of the Cross. He has given us, in the east of London and other parts of England, great parishes where one clergyman (I saw one the other day) toils on, breaks down exhausted, has to give up the work, or perhaps die in poverty because he is left without the help that a hundred a year would have given him. Now then, my brethren, imagine for one moment calmly our LORD JESUS CHRIST looking down, and knowing us, and knowing that we do desire (as many of you do desire) to do right; what must it be to Him to find that every arrangement is made (as we do make it, so very often,

all of us) irrespective of His wishes? We say we never thought of what CHRIST liked; we never thought what JESUS CHRIST wished us to do with our money.

You hear of this man with this number of thousands a year, and another with that; you hear of that servant's wages doubled; and so forth. You wonder what is going to be done with it all; and you find only larger provision for the children, or greater investments made. You know that the man, or the woman, or the servant, or whoever it is, has common sense, and that if it were put before such, they would understand that their income, or the capital they have received, has been increased by the LORD GOD, that out of their abundance (the Bible says it over, and over, and over again) they might supply the deficiencies of those who lacked. But it is not done. You know as well as I do, that even five women just appearing rather more frequently in the same gown at dinner, having a few gowns less, five gowns less amongst them, would in a moment have got the one hundred pounds so that the man's life might have been spared, and the Church of God not disgraced by the whole work being abandoned.

You know as well as I do, that there are numbers of men in England whose fortunes have increased so rapidly that their children can be brought up perfectly well, with as good an education as they desire, and be thoroughly well started in life, even according to the world's idea, and yet the ten or twenty thousand pounds in ten years might easily have been raised, so that that great African Mission, that is now dying out for want of that sum, might have been provided for, and those millions in India not be left with only a few bishops for a mighty country like that, linked as it is with England.

My brethren, we do not desire to do wrong, but we do not think of it, and I repeat, what breaks the

heart of any one, wife or husband, or mother or child—what breaks anybody's heart, who has a heart left to break, so much as indifference?

By indifference I mean the not thinking what CHRIST wants us to do with our money; the not thinking what CHRIST wishes us to do with those abounding resources; the not thinking why we are cleverer than other people, or have more beauty than other people, or more influence or whatever it may be; the not thinking, and therefore taking the adornments, and taking the beauty, and taking the intelligence, and taking the whole that GOD has given us, and lavishing it—not on sin, giving, it may be, a hundred here, and a hundred there, perhaps a thousand here, and a thousand there—but giving it irrespective of ever having realized what CHRIST wanted to be done with it; spending it on the world and the things of the world. Oh, think what CHRIST feels, when He knows what He is, when He knows what life means, when He knows what eternity involves! It would be no matter if He did not love you; it would be no matter if He had not died for you. Then it would not grieve Him. But it grieves Him because He loves you, and because He has given you all this that you may show you love Him, and gladden the heart of the crucified King. He is wounded, not by the outside world—that He expects—but wounded in the house of His friends. “It was not an enemy that has done Me this dishonour, for then I could have borne it: but it was thou, My friend, for whom I died, to whom I did give a Christian name; and yet thou didst never think how thou couldest please Me and gladden My heart.” Oh, my brethren, there is a life-long teaching in that word, “I know My sheep.”

2. And, lastly, how shall we carry out the teaching—how shall we, like S. Peter, be educated by the LORD

JESUS CHRIST? This way ; the collect gives the answer : let us receive that inestimable benefit, and then we shall follow in the steps of His most holy life. What do I mean? I mean leaving aside just at present—though it has its place in the Christian life—leaving out of sight the struggling to get near to GOD, the striving to rise up to heaven, the prayers, and all that ; let us take a simpler thought. Remind yourself, morning, noon, and night, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST knows you ; that the LORD JESUS CHRIST is about your path and about your bed, not to condemn you, but to bless you : that the LORD JESUS CHRIST is watching that He may see in you of the travail of His Soul and be satisfied. Thinking of Him in that way as a friend, a brother, a husband, dearer than life itself, and loving you with a love that nailed Him to the Cross on Calvary, receive the inestimable benefit. Instead of going away, like the other disciples did, keep close to Him as S. Peter did. Study that sixth of S. John : pray over it ; prepare for Holy Communion ; and come to be fed with the living Bread, and to receive the inestimable benefit : to drink of that living water.

Now, observe the difference between Judas and S. Peter. They were, both of them, greedy, selfish men. Judas said, "What will you give me?" S. Peter said, "I have left everything for you, O LORD : what shall I have?" Both had the same idea, "What can I get? What can I get? What will you give me? What will you give me?" It is just the idea of the world—one class saying, "Give, give" ; the other, "Grasp, grasp : keep, keep"—what can I get? What made the difference between them? Judas was always accustomed to look downwards ; S. Peter always looked upwards. He formed the habit of never keeping his mind for any long interval away from JESUS

CHRIST. And so, when they both sinned on that dark night, Judas naturally looked to himself, and he found nothing there but sin, and shame, and failure ; and so he did what numbers of men have done—he hanged himself. S. Peter was broken-hearted, but it was the habit of his life to look up to CHRIST directly, whether he had done a good thing or a bad thing, to see what the LORD JESUS CHRIST thought of it ; and so there streamed down into his heart that love unutterable, those fountains of living water were opened for him, and the man arose on the bright Easter morning full of resurrection life : because he looked unto JESUS, and JESUS CHRIST never forgets one of His sheep that trusts Him.

If you wish to rise this Eastertide, if you wish to know the higher life, form the habit of reminding yourself “JESUS CHRIST knows me ; JESUS CHRIST loves me ; JESUS CHRIST is thinking of me.” Then you will soon be ready to take up the Church’s conclusion to every sermon, and say :

“And now to GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST, three Persons and one GOD, be ascribed, as is most justly due, all honour and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, henceforth and for evermore. Amen.”

VII

PERSONAL SYMPATHY

"I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep."—
S. JOHN X. 14, 15.

Or, as it should be translated:

"I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine; even as the Father knoweth Me, and as I know the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep."

LAST time, if you remember, my brethren, we considered a special illustration of this passage as afforded to us by the education of the Apostle S. Peter. To-day, I prefer rather to consider with you the general principle which it involves.

"I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine—in the same way, with the same intimate, personal, individual knowledge. I know My sheep, and am known of Mine, even as the FATHER knoweth Me and as I know the FATHER: and I lay down My life for the sheep."

1. In the first place, let me remind you briefly of the peculiarities of a shepherd's life in those Eastern lands. We have all, at different times, I suppose, pictured to ourselves the long stretches of land unbroken by a single hedge, the wild beasts ever watching to devour, and the mountain torrents suddenly arising to sweep away the defenceless sheep. The shepherd, if he be a true man,

must give himself up entirely to the care of his flock. David, the shepherd-king, Jacob, the herdman of Laban, by the record of their experience, enable us in some degree to realize the picture which would be present to the minds of the disciples when the words of our LORD were spoken. We see the good shepherd, unwavering by day and by night, never failing, never disheartened ; we watch him under the summer sun, and beneath the biting winter frost ; speeding on against the driving snow and the pitiless showers ; listening unmoved to the roar of the thunder, and undismayed by the lightning-flash ; climbing up some almost perpendicular crag to snatch a handful of grass for the poor famishing sheep beneath. So there grows up between that shepherd and his flock a personal love, an almost human friendship. The shepherd individualizes his flock. He has a name for each ; he calls each one by its name ; when the shadows of evening are falling around, he gathers them around the tent door and singles them out one by one. He cannot be satisfied because the ninety and nine are there, if one has strayed away up the dark mountains. He cannot be satisfied : and why ? simply because he is what he is, the good shepherd ; because he knows his sheep and loves them, and would lay down his life for them.

Such, brethren, was the picture that the LORD JESUS CHRIST was drawing for His disciples, and for the Church in every age, when the words of the Gospel were uttered. We will not spoil the fragrance of the flower by plucking it to pieces, so as to analyse the species to which it belongs. Rather will we gaze upon it this morning, trying to draw in some of the heavenly light and life and beauty that the HOLY SPIRIT has provided for us in this wondrous Gospel.

“ I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, as

the FATHER knoweth Me, and as I know the FATHER." Try to lay hold of the thought for a single moment—before we pass on to the second division of the subject—try to lay hold, if you can, by the power of the HOLY GHOST, of the deep import of these words. Have you ever in a quiet hour of meditation imagined what the love of GOD the FATHER must be for the SON in Whom He is well pleased? Have you ever tried to think what is the response of that perfect humanity and perfect Godhead of the Incarnate LORD to the love of the Eternal FATHER? With reverence, let us dwell upon that companionship, that intimate friendship, that personal love, that eternal affection which exists between GOD the FATHER and GOD the SON. Then remember, that in plainest words, in language that a child can understand, He Who is the Truth has told us in words of truth that, such as the love of the FATHER is for the SON, such as is the love of the SON for the FATHER, such (and nothing less) is the love that the LORD JESUS CHRIST feels for you and for me. Such is the personal friendship, the intimate companionship, the undying affection which shall one day (thank God) be kindled in our hearts when we stand around the crystal sea, looking up into the face of Him Whom to know is to love. "I know My sheep, and am known of them, even as the FATHER knoweth Me, and as I know the FATHER."

2. Secondly, let us pass on and endeavour, if we can, to appropriate to some extent what is involved in this statement of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

It is almost a commonplace to say that no two persons are exactly alike. There is every kind of division. There are different classes of minds. In some you find the emotional element developed, in others the intellectual. Those who have trained their minds are often powerless to enter into the deeper feelings of those to

whom God has given an emotional nature. Those who live mainly by feeling, find it hard to enter into the perplexities of, and to make allowances for, the strong minds that refuse to say, "I believe," till they have grasped something by which their mind as well as their heart can be satisfied. Again, there are some, who, either through temperament or through God's providential dealing, manifested in the circumstances of their life, are called to action ; while on others is laid not less clearly the burden of suffering. It is very difficult for either class to enter into the peculiar difficulties of the other. The young find it very hard to make allowances for the old. It is the ever-recurring difficulty of parents—the rock on which many a child's life is hopelessly wrecked—the difficulty of remembering (as we say) that they were once young themselves. Further illustration is not needed for so obvious a truth.

What, then, our LORD JESUS CHRIST wishes to say to us in these words is this : that He is not a dead CHRIST, crucified once on Calvary, and so passing out of existence ; but One Who rose again from the dead, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and is alive now ; alive as the Good Shepherd ; alive, knowing each one of His sheep with an intimate personal knowledge, with an individualizing love that He compares to the affection and the knowledge that exists between Himself and His FATHER.

In other words, our LORD JESUS CHRIST is ever standing in our midst ; you may hear His voice speaking to you whenever you draw near to the holy table, saying in tenderest accents, "Come to Me, all ye who have to work, the workers, ye to whom the active side of life has been allotted. Come to Me, ye suffering ones, who are weary and heavy laden. I live with resurrection life, with fresh springs of action, and powers of endurance.

Come to Me, one by one. Let Me single you out ; in your own room, in the busy concourse of men ; above all, when I give you one by one the bread and the wine as the outward and visible sign of My inward and spiritual blessing."

(For you know, brethren, this special gift is not bestowed upon a whole church at once, not given to an entire railful, but is individualized—the Body broken for thee, for thee, for thee !)

"Come unto Me, all who have to work and labour ; come to Me, ye heavy laden : I will give you rest." Yes, give it freely ; rest, satisfaction alike for heart and mind, mental rest, spiritual satisfaction—the rest of the Everlasting God. With an intimate personal knowledge of every detail, the LORD JESUS CHRIST speaks to a fallen humanity. "I know My sheep, and I know their needs, and I call them by their names. Come to Me."

The whole forty days bring that grand truth before us. They teach us that our LORD JESUS CHRIST gathered up into Himself the perfection not merely of manhood or of womanhood, but the completeness of both. That word *man* often makes us lose the full force of heavenly teaching. CHRIST (I say it with reverence) had all the loving heart of a woman with the strong brain of a man. Very GOD ! Yes ! but very Man also ! He went up and down these forty days. He found some persons troubled ; He said, "Why are ye troubled ? Why do doubts arise ? Why these doubts ?" He entered into them ; He sympathized with them ; He strove to remove them ; those who often-times witness for CHRIST in their very zeal may be led into words that sound like denunciations of those who reject the Faith. The Master never spoke thus. "Why are ye troubled ? Tell Me ? Why do those perplexities arise ?"

Or, again, consider how CHRIST spoke to S. Thomas :

"Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side." He tells him, as it were, that something is wanting in him. If his heart has been perfectly right, there would have grown up an instinctive insight into the truth ; if he had not left his brethren on the previous Sunday, if he had been present with them in that upper room when CHRIST was manifested, his faith would not have failed. But still CHRIST takes him as he is. He helps him according to his special need at that special time. "Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side." Satisfy the mind. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed ; but still I love thee too dearly to leave thee in the dark shadow of that unbelief."

Once more, as He addressed Himself to the mind of S. Thomas, so He spoke to the heart of Mary ; spoke straight home to her with that one single word. There must be some, I imagine, in this church, who know the strange power of a name, simply uttered by one whose love we are certain of. JESUS looked on her, and He called her by her name, in that touching scene in the garden ; and the response came straight back, echoed from heart to heart, "Rabboni, Master."

Here, brethren, for the present I leave the subject. I would now only remind you in passing that our LORD gained this knowledge, not by the power of His Godhead, but by the power of His true humanity. He gained it by laying down His life ; not merely by dying on the Cross, but by the daily, hourly, sacrifice of Himself ; by the throwing Himself out of Himself unto the wants, the feelings, the difficulties of others. As the reward of that suffering, He gained the power of seeing at a glance what His people needed. Just as a teacher who gives himself heart and soul to his work knows instinctively what is wanted in that pupil ; just as the nurse who is a true nurse, working for love (whether she

is paid or not, that is no matter, paid or unpaid we can equally work from love—God forbid it should not be so), watches by day and by night till she gains such an entrance into the very heart of the patient as to be able to anticipate the very thing that is wanted to calm the fevered brow ; and sees without a word, almost without the hand being raised, what the poor sufferer requires, so it is with the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Yes, my brethren, the LORD JESUS CHRIST has by the sacrifice of Himself so identified Himself with us that He knows our wants before the words can be put into formal prayers, “our yet unuttered words’ intent.” You may be puzzled by manifold difficulties ; preachers may hinder rather than help you ; friends may misunderstand your motives ; Christian people may alienate you by their narrowness. To-day I have lifted up before you One Who not merely died for you but lives to help you—One Who can enter into every difficulty, sympathize with a loving personal sympathy in your every sorrow—One Who has said, “I know My sheep even as the FATHER knoweth Me, and as I know My FATHER.”

VIII

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

"I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine, even as the Father knoweth Me, and as I know the Father : and I lay down My life for the sheep."—
S. JOHN X. 14, 15.

THE simpler teaching on this subject was given on a former occasion.

We have—blessed be His Name !—a living CHRIST ; not merely One Who died on Calvary, but One Who is alive for evermore. And this LORD JESUS CHRIST, in the glory of His Ascension Kingdom, has taught us by the HOLY GHOST that He possesses an instinctive knowledge of every single need of every individual man and woman, rich and poor, learned and ignorant : all alike can rest assured of perfect intuitive sympathy existing for them in the heart of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Such was the blessed thought which we have already considered. The teaching for to-day is somewhat more difficult. Pray GOD the HOLY SPIRIT to enable me so to give it to you, clearly and definitely, that one grand thought (for the thought is grand, beyond the power of human words to express) may be lodged in your hearts, to bring forth the fruit in GOD's own time, for JESUS CHRIST's sake.

Our LORD tells us here that He knows His sheep. How did He gain this knowledge ? The superficial

answer is easily given : "Of course GOD knows everything." My brethren, that is a true answer, but an imperfect one. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST seems to be here speaking not of His Godhead, but of the knowledge that He had gained as Man ; "very Man" as we say in the Communion Office, "of the substance of the Virgin Mary His Mother" ; made like unto us in everything, sin only excepted, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest.

How, then, did He gain this knowledge as Man ? I believe that you have the answer to that question, or at all events, one answer, in the words of the text : "I lay down My life for the sheep." The HOLY GHOST teaches us, further, that we are to imitate this laying down of the life of JESUS CHRIST. "Hereby perceive we the love of GOD," says S. John, "because He laid down His life for us" ; and, therefore, on the principle of following the example of CHRIST, "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." In the Baptismal Service we are told that the following of the example of CHRIST is the profession of a Christian. As the soldier has his profession, so you and I have ours clearly set before us, namely, to follow the example of our Saviour CHRIST, and to be made like unto Him, the Incarnate GOD, our King, Who alone has the right to command our loyalty and our allegiance.

Yes ! "Because He laid down His life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." The Greek words are the same in both cases. You see what is meant ? We talk of giving up our life to a pursuit ; we talk of being devoted to some one, and so forth. What do we mean ? We mean that state of mind in which we are so possessed by affection for a person, by devotion to a country, by interest in any pursuit, that we give up ourselves absolutely to it, losing all thought of

ourselves, and (so to speak) living only for that person or object to which we are devoted.

This laying down of the life, this devotion of ourselves to any object or person, is the special means, even in earthly matters, by which knowledge is acquired and influence gained over our fellow-men. For instance, there are many who have given up their lives to society; and just as we admire a perfect statue, so there is something to admire in their career—the early training, the weary nights, the struggling to enter into one house after another, the perpetual watching, and the instinctive knowledge gained at last of the right thing to do on all occasions. This is a low illustration, but a true one, of the power that results from absolutely giving ourselves up to anything. I confess that to my own mind it does not appear a very noble ambition, for the man created in the image of God. I am afraid that, in the land beyond the grave, the most perfect manners may appear somewhat awkward, amid the glorious company of the angels. In the awful sarcasm of the New Testament, “they have their reward.” God gives it, or allows it to come to them, according to natural laws. They know society because they devoted their life to it.

Then rising higher, call to your mind that man who stood out, some years ago, as a light to the young men of London—who, though with every earthly advantage, settled himself down in his lonely lodging, in order that, by living amongst the people he might gain a real knowledge of them—that he might learn their way of thinking, the way in which they looked at our social problems, and regarded the varied difficulties by which every life is beset. Remember the power that that man has gained, how he entered into the very heart of those working-men, and was able to speak of them, not as the mass of so-called representatives of the working class like to

speaking, in absolute ignorance of them except so far as what they may have gathered from some highly-coloured newspaper! He knew them, because he had given himself up to them; because he had died to London, died to society, died even to political life, that he might enter into the heart of those men who had been, like himself, created in the image of God, and baptized into the Body of CHRIST.

If you go through the entire range of workers, whether religious or secular, you will always find that the secret of real knowledge, as to the needs of any class, is devotion to that class.

Here, then, we find the answer to our question, How did CHRIST gain the knowledge of His sheep? By laying down His life for them day by day. Are our hearts still so hard that they are not softened when we hear the King of kings and LORD of lords, not resting in the quiet of heaven, not remaining with the FATHER and with all the holy angels, but coming down to earth, to save us: to save the man—if such a one should have strayed into the church to-day—who hardly ever prays, and always turns his back on Holy Communion? Have you no hearts left? Even if you are conscious of no deeper feeling, have you no response of enthusiastic admiration, at any rate, for a GOD thus dying, hour by hour, and day by day, that He might win the confidence of a degraded humanity, and redeem it from the power of the world and the flesh and the devil?

If you take up the New Testament, you will see this love of JESUS CHRIST everywhere manifested. You find Him, for example, risking even His own reputation. Not that I recommend this; many a man, with a sort of Quixotic desire to do good, has imperilled that which he had no right to endanger. But CHRIST, in the grandeur of His self-sacrifice, risked His reputation,

dared to be called the "gluttonous" man and the "wine-bibber"; was not ashamed to be called the "friend of publicans and sinners"; touching, speaking to, sitting down at the table with, and listening to the ordinary conversation of men whom the Pharisee would not have touched with the very hem of his garment. And why was all this? It was that He might gain a knowledge of them, as Man; that He might be able to know what they felt, what were the burdens pressing on them, the sorrows by which their hearts were crushed. "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Blessed LORD, King of kings, in the glory of Thy self-sacrifice, eating and drinking with the outcast, that Thou mightest know Thy sheep, and be able to enter into every need and every sorrow of a stricken humanity!

One more illustration, of another kind, for you who have read your Bible. Do you ever read it? Last week, how many chapters? How many verses? Imagine a father writing to his boy in some far-off colony, and months afterwards, entering into the room and seeing the letters unopened, the seal unbroken, the dust gathered upon them; and then you can realize, to some extent, what God must feel when He sees the magnificent Bible, with its beautiful cross on the outside—or the poor little volume covered with dust in some lonely cottage—never read: the letter of the Everlasting FATHER to the children of His love. But I am speaking specially to you who have read your Bible. Have you observed, in some Gospels, how entirely our LORD put Himself at the disposal of other people? Have you ever traced His course through a few chapters? You observe Him going aside to rest, in His weariness. Then comes some call of a suffering humanity, at once His own ease is forgotten, and He begins to help the poor soul that wanted His help. Then He goes away

for spiritual refreshment, to pray to His FATHER ; but the crowds around Him have nothing to eat, and He comes out from His retirement to minister to their necessities. He goes away to the mountain, to be alone and commune with His FATHER ; but He sees the disciples in distress. He has been thinking of them, praying for them, and His heart goes out to them. Though absent from them in body, He is present with them in spirit. He sees the little ship tossed by the winds, and the waves dashing over it. At once His own spiritual refreshment, and His own hour of happy communion with His GOD, are put aside. He lays down His life. It is absolutely at the disposal of His people.

And here, my brethren, I must pause, having only, as it were, opened out the subject to you. GOD grant that this picture of the life of JESUS CHRIST may not be in vain ! May GOD the Blessed SPIRIT, stir your hearts, as He is stirring many a heart at Eton and Oxford and Cambridge, and not a few, thank GOD, in this great London of ours ! May GOD fire you to-day with an enthusiasm for humanity, as it has been well described, so that you may live to imitate CHRIST, laying down your life for your brethren, the sick, the suffering, the ignorant ; by giving yourself up to help them, to teach them, to rescue them out of the bondage of this evil world !

Oh, men and brothers, what a life is that to which we are called to follow CHRIST ! Take any day of the life of an ordinary respectable man or woman, and contrast it with the life of the Godhead manifest on earth. Contrast the self-sacrifice with the self-indulgence ; the devotion to others, with the perpetual morbid dwelling on self, on personal needs, personal advancement, personal trials. Look upon the form of the Crucified

One, day by day laying down His life for you ; and pray God to help you day by day to lay down your life for the Church ; to die for the poor souls that in this great England are perishing for lack of knowledge ; to die—perhaps even that reward may be given you at last—to die for some heathen tribe whom you shall bring out of the darkness of ignorance into the glorious light of the Gospel of CHRIST.

And in order that you may rise up to this self-sacrificing spirit, dwell upon the character of your LORD JESUS CHRIST. Accustom yourself to think—when you go to the House of Commons, to your business, to the daily drudgery of managing the details of the family, whatever the work, whatever the enterprise to which you are called—accustom yourself to think, “My LORD and my GOD is with me ; He knows me, not merely as GOD, but by the instinctive, sympathetic, loving knowledge gained as Man, by that life-long agony, that daily self-sacrifice.”

Thanks be to GOD ! We have for our Friend, our Companion, the LORD of our life and GOD of our salvation, One Who is very Man ; One Who has said, “I know My sheep, even as the FATHER knoweth Me, and as I know the FATHER.”

PART III

THE MESSAGE OF PROGRESS

“If we will take His easy yoke and light burden upon us, to follow Him in lowliness, patience and charity, and be ordered by the governance of His Holy Spirit.”

I

GRACE

"He giveth more grace."

S. JAMES iv. 6.

THERE is in the mind of GOD a definite end for which each of us was born into the world. This, our path of life, has, of course, been known to GOD from all eternity. Oft-times, indeed, we have all wandered from it. Some of us—GOD forbid it should be so!—some, it may be, have lost it for ever, by long persistence in following the devices and desires of their own hearts. The joy or the sorrow of that great eternity, that mysterious hereafter, will be the power that we shall possess of accurately tracing our lines of divergence from the divine ideal; the extent to which, through the grace of GOD, we have brought our will and life into harmony with that glorious ideal of the Eternal Godhead. We shall be happy, so far as we have done the Will of GOD. We shall for eternity regret even the single day, it may be, in which we wandered away deliberately to follow those devices and desires of our own wayward hearts.

Still, whatever may have been our degree of correspondence with GOD's Will, or of yielding to the temptations of the world, and the flesh, and the devil, the truth of GOD remains, unchanging and unchangeable. He "hath chosen us," He hath chosen you and me, in CHRIST, "before the foundation of the world, that we

should be holy" in heart and life. He hath prepared for you and for me certain definite good works, in order that we might walk in them. (*Eph.* i. 4, ii. 10.) They are always there, stretched out before that omniscient gaze. Not, observe, the same good works for each one; not the selfsame office for every member. S. Paul's words will express it with a beautiful simplicity: "All members have not the same office." The same measure of grace is not, in God's divine wisdom, assigned to each. "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of CHRIST." (*Eph.* iv. 7.) Each soul was "predestinated," the Bible tells us, "according to the purpose"—the oft-times inscrutable purpose—"of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own Will." (*Eph.* i. 11.) What God chose to do, He did.

To most of us the first manifestation of the Will of God was at our Baptism. In order to develop that eternal purpose to which I have referred, God Almighty caused us to be born in a country and in circumstances which made it possible for us to be baptized. Millions of people never could be baptized, by the circumstances of the case, the condition in which they were born, the very place in which their parents lived. But God so ordered it that it became possible for you and me, thus elected by Him, to be baptized. Then, He put it into the hearts of our parents to bring us to the holy font; and, while hundreds died before they were old enough to be baptized, He preserved your life and mine until we had thus been baptized with water, in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST.

I am purposely avoiding all technicalities and all definitions that would narrow your point of view, however accurate those definitions might be, and however valuable. For I am anxious not to complicate the sub-

ject, by anything which may provoke even a thought of controversy, as to this specific result of our Baptism. No intelligent person can spend even a few hours with his Bible and concordance without seeing that this great Sacrament is revealed by God as the first outward manifestation of that eternal Will of God to which I have referred. A peculiar link is then formed between the soul and the great Creator. God then put a definite mark on you : a mark that will last for ever and ever, in the glory of heaven, or in the fire of hell. God's mark, for weal or for woe, has been put upon us.

God there publicly recognizes (or makes—I care not, to-day, how you express it)—God recognizes that individual child, lying there in its helplessness, as a member of the chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the peculiar people, called out of darkness by His electing grace. That child is there definitely set apart by God as a temple in which the HOLY SPIRIT is to dwell (1 Cor. iii. 16), as “a member of CHRIST, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven”—of all the privileges, present and to come, of the great family of the redeemed.

Every promise that you find in the Bible is definitely made—definitely pledged, though not limited—to those who have been baptized into the “one Body.”

I know how prejudice is—even now, it may be—taking away the force of the words that are being spoken. “To the law and to the testimony !” If the Word of God, simply read with the help of an ordinary concordance, does not show you that this is the meaning of your Baptism, then let the words of the preacher perish ! But if God Himself has said it, then let every human teaching to which you have listened, that undervalued the great Sacrament of your regeneration, be for ever forgotten !

Every promise of the Bible (I repeat) is definitely covenanted to the baptized, until that soul, through yielding to the world and the flesh and the devil, is definitely cut off from CHRIST, the Source of light and life. When that takes place is known only to God. We can only deal with a congregation according to the law of charity, taking it for granted that the link still holds good.

It is perfectly true that—according to that mysterious law of death and apparent failure by which God allows His eternal purposes, so far as man can see, to be hindered—it is perfectly true that, in many cases, the seed of that Baptism never seems to grow up, the divine capacity never to be developed. Still, that is not perplexing. Thousands of natural seeds die. Thousands of men, with great mental abilities, waste them : so that sometimes the cleverest boy is simply useless in after life through the indolence of earlier days. God's gifts wasted ! You may read it in every field through which you walk on the bright summer day. You may see it in every crowd of idlers with which this great London is crammed : men who might have altered the aspect of the world—even, morally speaking, putting religion apart—simply drones in the hive.

This is not, therefore, a difficulty that religion has imported ; it is found in the natural world of God's creation ; it is found in ordinary life : wasted gifts, wasted opportunities ; magnificent capacities, ending in nothingness ! I cannot explain it.

Still, the fact remains. You do not say that God gave a man no ability because he never worked at school ; you say he has wasted that ability. You do not say that God did not give a man natural physical strength because, by the indulgence of degraded appetites, he has become a hopeless invalid ; you say, "Poor man !" or, "What a

fool he was!" The fact remains, the grace of God is the same, whether or not it be received in vain.

Every sect, every branch of the great Catholic Church, however different its phraseology, recognizes the other great truth that I wish to bring before you this morning—recognizes a period, be it long or short, in which the soul, in its own awful individuality, consciously embraces the terms of the New Covenant. Our freedom of will is now brought into exercise. If this were not the case, God would be dealing with a living man as with inanimate matter, or as some will-less bond-slave.

Our own Church seals this act of the individual soul at Confirmation. Other branches of the Church may have different rules. Sects that are separated from the Church may shrink from the idea of "Confirmation." But all have some definite mark by which they seal the individual response of the separate soul to the eternal counsel of God.

At our Confirmation we come forward and say, in other words, "I thank God that I have been called into a state of salvation. I know it now. I can look up into the face of my bishop, and beyond the bishop—beyond the human instrument, up to the living CHRIST, Whose own hand will surely be laid upon me to-day. And here, in the Presence of God, and of this congregation, in the presence of angels and archangels, and of all the company of heaven, I say aloud, 'I do—I do give myself, by my own will, in honest, humble response to that eternal call of God.' God chose me. God baptized me. God has taught me that I am a sinner. God has taught me that He has washed me from my sin, and that I am accepted in the Beloved. And now I offer and present myself to Him. And God vouchsafes to me the fulfilment of my Baptism, the gift of the Blessed Spirit, to dwell in me as in a living temple. Sealed with this seal of my Confir-

mation, I shall go, as frequently as I feel to be reverent, to Holy Communion, that I may receive more and more grace, more of the divine nature, through the incoming of the blessed Body and Blood of CHRIST into my soul."

In other words, at Confirmation we profess to acknowledge ourselves sinners, to be at peace with GOD, to have given ourselves up to our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and to have made up our minds to go regularly to His holy table, according to His dying command. The will of GOD, you observe, has now found a response.

Therefore, any of us who have been confirmed, and yet are not conscious of our sin; or have not realized pardon and peace, so as to serve GOD "with a quiet mind"; or have not humbly and honestly, however imperfectly, given ourselves up to JESUS CHRIST—any of us who, though confirmed, are in this condition, are in a wrong condition, a wrong position, from GOD's point of view. We have missed our road. We have either not understood, or not really responded to, the grace of our Baptism and Confirmation, and the eternal counsel of our GOD.

This mistake may be the result of circumstances, such as involuntary ignorance, or that invincible prejudice which well-meaning religious parents, who are full of party spirit, oft-times give—a most awful inheritance—to their children; that sort of prejudice which makes a child afraid of hearing even the names of Baptism, or regeneration, or Holy Communion, or of peace, or conversion, or any other of the great words that have become like symbols of the eternal verities. Many, I say, through the mistake of religious parents, have been allowed to grow up in an atmosphere of controversy—which is the devil's atmosphere, except where it is forced upon people in the cause of GOD and of truth, and met in the spirit of love. Such as these, of course, are judged by GOD according to His infinite mercy.

But if this want of recognition of guilt, and of peace with God, and of surrender, be the result of self-will, or of earthly-mindedness—that miserable craving to be safe, and yet popular, which makes it almost an impossibility for the soul to be true to God, or true to itself—if it be the result of sin, that soul “will have to give account thereof,” not unto man, but unto its God, “in the Day of Judgement.”

Whatever be the cause, however, the contradiction between God’s ideal and the state of that soul is so terrible that no man who understands God’s truth can fail to be very anxious about it. And therefore our Church implores, though she cannot and would not compel—every branch of the Church that has tried to force individual liberty has only issued in utter corruption of the true Faith—she implores any one who is in that state, any one who has not found out his sin, who does not feel at peace with God, who cannot come regularly and with comparative frequency to Holy Communion, to go at once to his minister ; to seek help, without delay, from the spiritual physician, lest he should “suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy.”

Until this point has been reached, till Baptism and Confirmation have become a reality, the Prayer Book has no meaning for your soul.

I do not mean, of course, that God does not bless every one of you, in coming to church. You need not go empty away. The more desire that you show to honour God, by worshipping Him, by falling down and kneeling before Him in His holy house, is sure to be accepted, sure to be blessed, by that All-merciful and Almighty FATHER. But what I mean is this—that the Prayer Book has no meaning, intelligently considered, for that soul. I am speaking to men and women who have intelligence, if only they will bring it to bear upon the

things of GOD as they do bring it to bear upon the things of this life, and I want to carry your minds with me, not merely the passing emotion of the moment.

The Prayer Book has no meaning for the intelligence of a man until his Baptism and Confirmation have been realized. For the Prayer Book takes for granted, from the beginning to the end, that we feel at peace with GOD; that we go to Holy Communion; that if we die, the Church may thank GOD with all her heart that we are "delivered out of the miseries of this sinful world," having no doubt whatever that we have gone to JESUS CHRIST, in Whom we believed when on earth. All her confessions, her absolutions, her psalms and hymns and prayers, take for granted that, although conscious of continual shortcomings, the great issues of life are settled; that we are only poor penitent sinners, but still "at peace with GOD, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST," and coming regularly to the holy table to be fed with that spiritual food and sustenance.

Then the Church, taking this for granted, becomes the mouthpiece of the soul speaking to GOD, and of GOD speaking to the soul by His Word.

She puts into our lips the right language in which to acknowledge our sin. She brings to us, from time to time, different messages from the great GOD and FATHER of all. You see what I mean. GOD is like a father. But an earthly father does not teach his little child everything that he wishes him to learn when he is ten, or even fifteen, years old. There is a gradual revelation of the father's will, a gradual unfolding of the father's character, a gradual communication of the stores of wisdom that the father may have gained in the experience of years. And so, through the Church, GOD deals with His children.

The believing Christian's experience is exactly oppo-

site to that of the man who tramples under foot and despises his birthright, setting his affection on things below, minding earthly things, and glorying, not in the Living God, but in his shame ! As the body, if not exercised, becomes feeble and effeminate ; as the mind, if not used, degenerates into idiocy, so also the spirit, though baptized into God, gradually decays, withers, dies, through want of healthy exercise, through want of response to the teaching of God, at each recurring Epiphany, and Lent, and Easter, and Whitsuntide.

But it is not so with the believing Christian, taught by the Church to walk in God's holy ways. As the hand becomes stronger by being used, and the intellect waxes riper by continual exercise, so the immortal spirit, trained, exercised, strengthened by every temptation that it overcomes, by every trial that it endures, by every victory that it gains over the body—strengthened even by its failures and its falls and its uprisings—grows in grace and in the knowledge and the love of God. It grows in faith, and hope, and love, and surrender, and thanksgiving, and praise, and power to adore and to worship the Invisible and Eternal God.

II

EARTHEN VESSELS

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."—
2 COR. iv. 7.

ALMIGHTY GOD was pleased to redeem this world through the Incarnation of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, having become Man, perfectly fulfilled, as our representative, the Divine Law. He, then, as Man, accepted the fact that sin involved death. As the representative of humanity, He died upon the Cross ; making there, by His one oblation of Himself once offered, a full, perfect, and complete atonement for the sins of the whole world. By his rising again from the dead, He manifested to angels, to the dark powers of the kingdom of Satan, and to the world, that the sacrifice had been accepted ; that, as man's representative, in the reality of His human nature, He was accepted by the FATHER, and able to become, as a second Adam, the founder of a new race. In Him we died ; in Him we suffered the penalty of sin, which is death, in Him we rose, and ascended into heaven.

Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, when He ascended, left behind on earth a twofold witness.

"When the Comforter is come," He said, "Whom I will send unto you from the FATHER, He shall testify of Me ; and ye also shall bear witness." Outwardly, there was the Church ; inwardly, there was GOD the

HOLY SPIRIT. When, as we read in the last verses of S. Mark's Gospel, the LORD was "received up into heaven," His Church "went forth and preached everywhere, the LORD working with it." CHRIST invisible, the Church visible ; CHRIST the husband, invisible ; the Church His bride, manifest to the world. By means of this Church, helped by GOD the HOLY GHOST, grace and life eternal were to be communicated to a fallen world. It was GOD's Will that, through this Church, He should give light and life and salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The means by which children and adults alike have always been admitted into this body is Holy Baptism. All persons, clergymen and laymen, old and young, who have been baptized into the Church of JESUS CHRIST—unless they have been openly excommunicated by the Church lawfully gathered together in the Name of GOD—we are bound to regard as members of that Church.

In the Jewish Church there were many who were regarded by their fellow-creatures as members of the body—and rightly so regarded, having, equally with themselves, been circumcised, and made partakers of the privileges of the body—and who yet in the eye of GOD were not the true Israel, because they had not really believed in GOD or yielded to Him. So also we are told in Holy Scripture, in the midst of the Church of GOD—this Catholic Church to which you and I belong, this pure and reformed branch of the Catholic Church to which it is our privilege to belong—in the midst of this Church of GOD, there are, beneath the outward surface, a mass of persons who in GOD's sight are regarded as having long ago lost, or as having never claimed, the privileges of their Baptism. But we have no right to pluck up those tares. We have no right to judge. Those who are now tares may, thank GOD !

become wheat before the LORD appears. At all events, the judgement is of God, "Who art thou that judgest another?" If they have not been openly excommunicated, or openly and avowedly excommunicated themselves, they are to be regarded as "believers," having been baptized into the Holy Trinity.

It is only ignorant persons—let me remind you, in passing—who speak of being ordained into the sacred ministry of the Church, as "going into the Church." We go into the Church—we are brought into the Church—when at the font we are baptized, and made members of CHRIST, children of God, and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven.

This Church is described in various ways in the Bible. But whatever illustration may be used, there is always the description given of certain persons, no more important than the rest of the Church in one sense, and yet raised by God to a much higher position; not higher in a worldly sense, but higher in the divine estimate of the Kingdom of God. When the Bible speaks of the Church as a "body," it says that there are in it certain organs, just as God has made the hands and other organs of our natural body; when it is described as an army, there are certain persons who are officers in the army.

One mistake which Dissenters have made is that they look upon the hands as made by the body; whereas the Bible says (in Ephesians iv. and 1 Corinthians xii.) that God gave all these: pastors, evangelists, apostles, and the like; that God appointed the officers of the army; that God made the hands of the spiritual body, just as He made the hands of the natural body. In the great Church of CHRIST dispersed throughout the world we rejoice to know that we live under a monarchy; that the source of the life and the power is from above, and

not from beneath ; that though the hands are nothing without the body, and the officers nothing except as part of the great army, still the Almighty God has ordained the one, and constituted the other.

God forbid that it should ever be thought that the thoughtful, calm, quiet clergy, and the bishops of England, have the slightest jealousy of the laity ! We depend upon you. Our interests are bound up with yours in everything. The mistake that Dissenters have made has been merely a reaction from the great mistake of some branches of the Catholic Church, in ignoring the position of the laity ; and the difficulty is, how now to bring things back again to their old primeval harmony : how to make the Body of CHRIST as it was in the beginning, the recognized organs appointed by God, though only existing in and for the body, the highest in "the household of God," to be the servants of all ; he who in one sense is greatest, to be in another sense the least and last of all, trying to copy his Master, washing the disciples' feet.

Now, my brethren, if you have followed this course of sermons, you will remember that the divine principle which we are considering is this. It is the Will of Almighty God, in the instrumentality that He uses for the converting or blessing of humanity, that the external should be commonplace and ordinary, and even unattractive ; in order, as the Apostle has told us in my text, that the power may be clearly recognized to be not in the instrument, but in the Invisible God. And so we have seen that the Sacraments, though outwardly only bread and wine, and water, are yet in the Bible language described in words which I did not attempt to explain, but which were to the most ordinary child's intelligence words of stupendous import. We saw that even JESUS CHRIST Himself was "despised and rejected of men,"

and was at last nailed to a cross as an impostor ; that He deliberately chose to be the first instance of this great law of the spiritual Kingdom, that the outward should be commonplace, while the inward is divine and supernatural.

I would now ask you to look back with me, very briefly, and see how, in the lives of the Apostles, this great principle was enunciated : " We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Look back with me for a moment, to the men whom we all regard as saints—as S. Peter, S. James, S. John, and S. Paul.

Let us observe, first of all, the way in which they described themselves ; the high privilege which they claimed, the glowing language in which they described the position in which God had placed them. They said that they were " the ministers of CHRIST." They said that they were " stewards " to whom God had confided His confidential secrets ; " stewards of the mysteries of God " (1 Cor. iv. 1). They said that Almighty God Himself had sent them as His royal " ambassadors," invisibly surrounded with all the glory and the power of the King Who had sent them throughout the world, and Who had said : " He that heareth you heareth Me ; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me ; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me " (S. Luke x. 16). If you take any of the texts I have quoted, and follow the subject, with the help of marginal references, through the Bible, you will see that I have not exaggerated the position which they occupied.

Whenever the Apostle Paul found his authority questioned—when a Church like that of the Galatians looked down upon him, when a proud city like that of the Corinthians remarked only upon his outward defects, and saw nothing in him that was divine, he said, " I have

authority, because GOD has sent me ; and I want to use the authority which the LORD has given me, in building you up, 'to edification, and not to destruction.' " (2 *Cor.* x. 3-11 ; xiii. 3, 4, 10.) We wish to be "your servants for JESUS' sake" ; not lords over you ; to be "helpers of your joy" ; not to "have dominion over your faith." (2 *Cor.* iv. 5 ; i. 24.) In other words, "I wish to take the lowest position ; but if my authority be questioned, then, in the Name of the GOD Who sent me, I dare not be silent."

Look out carefully in the concordance such words as "authority," "power," and the like, and you will see what strong words the Apostle used. If he had uttered such words in the present day there would have been an outcry against him from one end of England to the other. If he had dared to stand up and utter some of the simple sentences which we read every Sunday in church, he would have been denounced as the Apostle of "Sacerdotalism" ; as a man to be scouted out of the earth, as claiming prerogatives belonging only to the Incarnate GOD !

There was the one side, you observe—the inward and the spiritual—to be revealed by GOD the HOLY SPIRIT to those who studied their Bible and who humbly received the teaching of the HOLY GHOST. But on the other hand, nothing can be more simple, nothing can be more humble, than the way in which the Apostle describes himself. Let me, this morning, take you back to your Bible. Would to GOD that all of you would really study it ! Perhaps you are wearied with what I am saying, because it is so familiar ; but suffer me for a moment to remind you of commonplaces.

Whatever be the right idea as to that "thorn in the flesh" of which the Apostle speaks (2 *Cor.* xii. 7, see *Gal.* iv. 15), it is perfectly certain that the general

impression of him was this, "Poor man, he is not worth listening to; his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." (2 *Cor.* x. 10.) His presence has something very unattractive about it; and as for his way of speaking, it is "contemptible." The exact word used in the Greek means "of no account—nothing." "He can write a good letter, but he is quite a miserable speaker." That is the report given to us of the way that he was described. When he stood up at Athens, they said, "What is this babbler talking about?" (*Acts* xvii. 18). Babblers! Could you have a more contemptuous word? The common talk in various places was that he was a man who had broken the law, and was upsetting the foundations of society, going about disturbing the peace; or that he was really an Egyptian who had headed an unsuccessful revolution, and being annoyed at his failure was now going to other places to attempt another revolution. (*Acts* xvi. 20, 21; xvii. 6, 7; xxi. 28, 38; xxii. 22; xxiv. 5, 6.)

Now, my dear brethren, make an effort; try to realize such a condition of things; try to put yourselves into the position of the men of that generation. How contemptible, how commonplace, it all seemed! Think of it a moment.

And then, there was no miracle wrought, even to secure outward union among the Apostles themselves. Openly, before the Church, there was a dispute between S. Peter and S. Paul; the one declaring plainly to the other that his course of action was a mistake; that "he was to be blamed." (*Gal.* ii. 11-14.) And there has been no disguising of the facts. It has been written down in the Bible by the Blessed Spirit, and handed on to the Church in every age. The people doubtless said in that day, as they have said in every age, "If only those Christians would agree! There are only a few of

them ; surely they might make up their own minds, and satisfy their own consciences as to what is true or false, right or wrong, before they come to preach to us ! If Peter and Paul do not agree, we cannot be expected to attend to them. We are too busy ; there is money to be made, business to be done ; there are all the mighty interests of this world to be attended to. When they have settled their own disputes, then let them come to us."

There is no time to go on further with the subject. Unless I have utterly failed, you have seen something of the real position of those followers of JESUS CHRIST ; those men whom we now regard as Apostles and saints ; the officers and leaders of the spiritual army ; the men to whom we all look up with respect that is not confined to Churchmen, but it is shared even by unbelievers. For all men respect S. Paul. Every life of S. Paul that has ever been written, whether by unbeliever or believer, has done homage to that gigantic intellect, that self-sacrificing love, that unwearied devotion. All hero-worshippers worship S. Paul. And yet, in his own day, what was the opinion of the world ? A fool, a "babbler," not worth listening to ! "His bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." "Despised, buffeted, reviled, persecuted, defamed, made as the filth of the earth, the offscouring of all things" ; it is impossible to exaggerate the epithets that he himself uses in describing the way in which he was regarded by the men of his own day (1 Cor. iv. 9-13).

The practical conclusion is obvious. The Bible speaks of even the most commonplace minister that was ever seen in a little out-of-the way church, with a poor stammering tongue, as of one through whom God is pleased to convey a blessing to those who want a blessing. In Ephesians iv. we are told that when JESUS went

up on high and led captivity captive, His FATHER gave Him certain gifts to bestow upon men : and one of the gifts which He thus bestowed was the gift of ministers, to be means of grace to their fellow-men.

Now, my brethren, let us all look back upon the past. Again and again, you and I have gone into a church, and because there was no popular gift—because there was nothing that attracted our fancy, or satisfied our intellect—we have allowed our thoughts to wander, without an effort to fix them on the sermon.

“Babbler ! What is he talking about ?” And all the while, behind that poor despised man was the Eternal God, Immortal, Invisible, dwelling in the light that no man can approach unto ; veiling His glory, as He veiled it in the manger at Bethlehem and on the Cross of Calvary ; veiling it, as He now does beneath the water in the font, and the bread and the wine at the holy table ; veiling the stupendous majesty of a divine gift by that commonplace exterior.

My brethren, have we not cause, all of us, to look back with shame at the way in which, in former years, we have seen only the earthly and the outside : only the outward instrument, only the “earthen vessel”—mere crockery, to use the word that is translated “earthen”—a thing contemptible, to be crushed under our feet ? All those years we never saw in those despised ministers of CHRIST the channels through which God was waiting to bless every poor soul that wanted a blessing ; the channels through which God was willing to give, from the holy table, and at every Morning and Evening Prayer, joy and peace, and liberty and pardon, the fullness of the blessing of JESUS CHRIST.

My dear brethren, we have sinned. Let us sin no more. As the believers of old, when our LORD was on earth, looked through the commonplace exterior of our

dear LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, so let us, in the Church, look through that which is outward and visible, and see behind it all, JESUS blessing, JESUS absolving, every morning and evening, in that wonderful Absolution, JESUS giving us light and grace and strength. We shall reverence all alike, then, good preachers and bad. Though our best ought to be given to GOD—and the Church ought not to be satisfied with anything less than the best—yet the poorest minister of CHRIST will be to us good enough for a channel, through which the CHRIST will give grace and life and blessing ; and we shall depart in peace, because our eyes have looked above the minister, and seen the salvation of GOD : the Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity.

III

BURDENS

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."—GAL. vi. 2.

IT is, my brethren, a great privilege—for which GOD's holy Name be praised—to be allowed, Sunday after Sunday, to speak to you in the Name of the ever-blessed and glorious Trinity. Difficult though the sermon was in some respects to preach, it is a privilege to be allowed to deliver that message from our GOD and FATHER: "Bear ye one another's burdens."

It is true that the visible results, hitherto, have been few; but GOD's message has been delivered. All that was earthly, all that was human and mistaken, will quickly pass away, and probably is even now forgotten; but the Truth of GOD, the Word of the Eternal, never returns to Him void. GOD's Word, however feebly uttered, has sunk down into honest and true hearts. It is not for us to know the times or the seasons. In GOD's own time, and in GOD's own way, the results will be manifested. The seed will spring up: "first the blade, and then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear." Thanks be to GOD, Who always gives the victory, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD!

Yes, and that "money-sermon" has already brought back glad tidings: so marvellous is the working of GOD's Blessed Spirit! In many a little paper sent to us, with a few shillings carefully enclosed, are words of faith,

and hope, and joyful thanksgiving : words that would cheer those who are quietly interceding with God, Sunday after Sunday, for the work of His Church in this place. They told us how, to many an overburdened soul, a glad message had been borne ; how the voice of the LORD GOD had been heard, and not in vain, saying to them : "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Better far than the offering itself were those simple words, telling us how God had lightened the heart and saved the soul, through His own blessed Word, preached in His Name.

Frequently I have to speak to you of parochial burdens. To-day I am to speak to you about the burdens of the Church abroad ; and by way of introduction, I would guard you against several mistakes.

1. We are tempted to fancy that we have no money. We are beginning, I think, to exaggerate the great depression which exists ; to make it an excuse for everything that is left undone.

I know but too well how heavily it is pressing on many in the parish. In this, God knows, I can sympathize with you. And, as I have not seldom said, I am not judging individuals, but speaking of the aggregate possibilities of the parish. I have been in other parishes, where my richest people, with perhaps a single exception, had not so much as the upper servants have here. And I know, by my own experience in those parishes, how, by the co-operation of a few persons, who were themselves unable to give, but who were not afraid to ask, for God and for His Church, large sums have again and again been collected. And, therefore, when I speak to you of the possibilities of this parish, I take for granted that many who are unable to give more than they are already giving can ask

others ; or, at all events, can make known to others, far and wide, the needs of God's Church, both at home and abroad.

And, further, my brethren, when we invite others to co-operate, and when we hear, in answer, of the general depression, we must be honest with our friends. You may remember a statement that was made last year, in a well-known paper, as to the detailed expenditure involved in every large entertainment. With its help, or that of any ordinary paper of the day, you can form a fair idea how much money has been actually found, and ungrudgingly spent, in London, during this season. It may have been spent in the most innocent manner ; but spent it certainly has been. Therefore, we must remind our friends that God's Kingdom is not to be the only thing that is to be overlooked ; that there is money for the Church of God, both at home and abroad, as a matter of fact ; because money can be found for dress, for amusements, for the manifold calls of this earthly life.

The subject is of vital importance. When you and I meet God, I shall have to give an account to Him, whether I spoke out, plainly and simply, all that I believed He had given me to say. And you will require no preaching, then, to show how much might have been set apart for God.

No one that I have ever met, who has really studied the subject, has come to the conclusion that the Bible warrants setting apart less than one-tenth ; and those whom God has prospered can do much more. I am not judging any one ; I am telling you the result, so far as I am aware, of all thoughtful investigations of the Bible on this subject. And I know an instance of one, not so rich as many in this church, who never used to give more than a casual offering on the Sunday, and

possibly an occasional subscription ; who now, since he has studied the Bible on this subject, has given £400, at least, this year, for the work of God at home and abroad.

You will not, then, wonder that I press home this subject, even at the risk of wearying you, once or twice in the year. It would be awful to wake up at the Last Day, and to feel that God had called us to supply the need of His Church at home and abroad, and that, simply through want of thought, we had given hundreds, where we might have given thousands ; shillings, where we might have given sovereigns ; or had even closed our ears altogether to the appeal of the Living God, to Whom every one of us shall give account of himself in that day.

The second mistake is, perhaps, in a large measure the result of my own want of definiteness. There is an idea here current, that there are so many appeals made from time to time, that it is utterly wearying and perplexing.

My brethren, are you tired of appeals ? And do you not think that we are tired, saddened, when bishop after bishop comes to us in that Board-room of the S.P.G., his heart full of joy that God has answered his prayers, that whole tribes are prepared to come over, that he has an opportunity of establishing the Kingdom of God, to an extent that he had never dared to anticipate ; and then says to us : "All that I need is——," mentioning some sum, "for the early expenses, till the Mission can support itself" ; and we are obliged to answer : "It is utterly impossible" ? Do you not think, my dear brethren, that if you are sickened with appeals, we also are sickened by having to say No to God's ambassadors, when we know what thousands of pounds are being spent every day on the kingdom of this world ? Do

you not think that the bishops of the Church must go back almost broken-hearted, when they walk through such a parish as this, and see on every side the signs of almost untold wealth, and then when they ask for some modest pittance, the price, it may be, of two or three entertainments, are bidden to go home again, to tell to the whole of that sorrowing Church that England is powerless to help? My brethren, I dare not trust myself to say more.

2. The only other mistake which I need mention is one that, I believe, lies at the root of a great deal of the indifference to Foreign Missions. Words have a strange influence over thoughts; and that word "foreign" has, I believe, done a great deal to alienate the hearts of English people from the work of the Church abroad. There is a sort of idea that there are two Churches! It only needs to put it into plain words to expose the fallacy. The Church is described in the Bible as "the Body of CHRIST"; but the Body is one, although it has many members. The Church is described as "the Temple of the living GOD"; but the Temple is one, though formed of many living stones. The Church is a "Vine," with manifold branches, stretching out north and south and east and west; but the Vine is one tree.

So also in its more militant aspect, as opposed to the principalities and powers of darkness that are everywhere thwarting it throughout the world, the Church is an army; many regiments, at home and abroad, yet but one army.

"One army of the living God,
At His command we bow";

whether in Africa or India, or the far-off islands of Melanesia, or in our own favoured homes and churches in England. And just as, in the earthly army, any

difference that is made is in favour of the service abroad, so also should it be with the great army of the Church militant; the Church of CHRIST, fighting the battle of the LORD against the powers of evil. For the soldiers of the earthly army, when serving abroad, nothing is ever grudged. The men are properly equipped; the best arms are sent. In proportion to the difficulty of the war is the generous spirit in which England rises, so carefully to provide, that no single need of her soldiers shall be overlooked.

And you and I, my brethren, believe that we are serving under the banner of the Eternal King. We believe that we belong to the "one army of the living GOD." And it is for our fellow-soldiers abroad that I am pleading; our fellow-soldiers who have gone to the front; soldiers who are laying down their lives, giving up home and friends and earthly ambition, loyally and gladly, for the King of kings. It is for them that I plead: for those whom the LORD has called to serve Him abroad, those to whom He has given the noble spirit of self-sacrifice, those who are going out in His Name to plant the banner of the Cross in the uttermost parts of the earth. Would that I could stir in your hearts a real enthusiasm for this part of our "one army," dying out, as it is, through want of support in this our favoured England.

We do believe in GOD the FATHER Almighty. We believe that GOD so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten SON, to be "the Saviour of the world." And we believe that as GOD called Him to live a life of daily martyrdom, so He gave Him to die for us, to shed His Blood as an atonement for our guilt, that every poor, weary, sin-stricken sinner might receive, without money and without price, through that precious blood-shedding, full and complete forgiveness. And

we believe that our LORD is alive. It is not a dead CHRIST that we worship. It is not in the name of a dead CHRIST that we have offered up our prayers to-day. It is not a dead CHRIST Who has told us, "Whosoever two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

We believe this. And was there ever a true teacher who felt no interest in the progress of his scholars? Was there ever a real leader of an earthly army who cared not whether his soldiers were defeated, or whether they brought back the colours triumphantly—even though it might be through the very valley of death—out of the land of the foe? What leader is there, worthy of the name, who does not care for his soldiers?

And does not our "Leader and Commander" care? Does not that CHRIST Who shed His Blood for the world look anxiously—to use human language reverently—on the conflict? Are we not told that the LORD is "henceforth expecting," "waiting," till His enemies are subdued beneath His feet?

He is waiting. He hears the prayers of the Church on earth. He hears the prayers of the Church in Paradise—those blessed ones—the little children, all the dear ones whom you have mourned, and may be mourning to-day. He desires the day when He shall come back in His glory, and establish on earth a Kingdom of Righteousness for ever and for ever. He hears the groans of this weary world, the great travail-pangs of creation. And He is waiting; waiting to come back in His glory, waiting to set the world free from all its sorrow, sin, and trouble. He is waiting, my brethren—for what?

He has told us: "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall

be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations ; and then shall the end come." (*S. Matt.* xxiv. 14.) He is waiting ; not till all the world has been converted, but till the Gospel of His Kingdom has been proclaimed among all the nations of the earth as a "witness." And then the end shall come.

CHRIST has called some of you, I believe, to go forth yourselves ; all of you, to help, in the Name of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, by Whom, unworthy though I am, I have been sent into this pulpit. I lay upon you, brethren, beloved in CHRIST, the burden which I can no longer carry alone : the burden of the leaders of GOD's spiritual army, fighting for CHRIST in foreign lands.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of CHRIST." It is the burden—I say it with reverence—of our crucified and ascended LORD Himself. He is waiting for your prayers, your efforts, your alms—waiting—how long, O LORD ? How long ?

IV

A SERMON FOR SCHOOLS

"I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation."

HEB. xiii. 22.

I AM well aware, my brethren, that few things are less popular than charity sermons. . . .

Each man and woman present in this church must help if the work is ever to be accomplished. I say each man and woman in this church—not merely those who as a general rule worship within its walls, but all who by God's providence have this day been brought here to learn the sad tale of our most urgent need—all, whatever their own parish may be, have an interest in this matter. If these children are sent adrift to swell the hordes of city arabs with which London streets are crowded, you may rest assured that the evil which is wrought by their hands will be felt directly or indirectly by the entire community.

When they go forth to cheat and steal, they will not, we may feel quite certain, be hindered by any delicate scruples from passing the boundary line of the particular district in which they have been reared. But you will ask, How can we help? First and foremost, I desire that all who in God's mercy have been taught the blessing of prayer, all who have learned to draw near to Him as their reconciled FATHER, through JESUS CHRIST, should use in behalf of this district the power which God has placed in their hands.

“While the child was yet alive,” said David, “I fasted and wept : for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, . . . can I bring him back?”

The life of these children, their true life, is placed in our hands ; yet a little while it may be too late. Pray for us.

But this is not all. Some here present can give us donations, or add to those which they have already contributed. The mothers and daughters can take cards and plead the cause of the schools amongst their friends. The men in the congregation can come forward and volunteer to collect from house to house, from street to street. All in their several ways are able to assist ; all, I hope, will show their readiness to assist, not merely by contributing liberal donations this morning, but by taking the trouble to attend at any meeting, of which notice may be or has already been given.

Brethren, suffer this word of exhortation. Forgive me if I speak more directly than many would prefer. We wish to realize, and to help you in realizing, that this is no mere ordinary appeal. We wish to feel and to enable you to feel how great is the need of concentrated persevering efforts. We desire to speak this day as those who may at any moment be called to render an account to that God by Whom these little ones have been entrusted to our care. We are anxious to leave no means untried, so that in that solemn hour we may at least be found to have done all that in us lay to educate them as our FATHER in heaven would have them educated. Therefore we use great plainness of speech, and do not shrink from using any argument by which our appeal can be strengthened.

We plead with you, brethren, on personal grounds. Everywhere the complaint is heard that sermons nowa-

days are feeble alike in thought and expression. There is nothing new, we are told ; no light thrown upon any of the difficulties by which the present age is perplexed. Far be it from me to question the justice of the verdict which has thus been passed upon us. No one, I can assure you, is more conscious of the defects of their sermons than those by whom they have been delivered. No one feels more acutely than we do how far we fall short of that glorious commission with which our God has entrusted us—how unfit we are to stand forth as ambassadors for CHRIST, to plead with the souls for which His precious Blood was shed.

Only, I am speaking to Englishmen who pride themselves on their justice and fair dealing, and I ask, how is it possible for us to make full proof of our ministry if the burden which belongs to the whole Church is laid, as is now the case, almost entirely upon the clergy ? Among the bodies of Nonconformists it is the pride of the laity to relieve their minister from these secular duties in order that, by careful study and earnest prayer, he may become strong in the LORD, and have power to awaken the careless, to comfort the weak-hearted, to console the mourners, to direct the perplexed and anxious conscience. But to us in this Established Church, what is the alternative which is offered ? What is the alternative which is now offered to me in this district of S. Peter's ? Either all the charities must be starved, the schools unbuilt, the children untaught, or I must turn my back upon my spiritual work, leave the strong meat of God's Word untouched, or at least undigested, must allow the sick to be unvisited, the poor untended, and spend hours of every day in acting the part of an ecclesiastical mendicant, in going from door to door to crave for the oft-times begrudged subscription.

Is this right, brethren ? Is there any value in that

attachment to a National Church, which, while it claims its right to the privileges of membership, refuses to accept the responsibility with which that membership is individually united?

Brethren, I am persuaded better things of you. Though I thus speak, I should indeed be grieved if I were to appear in the slightest degree to undervalue the help which is so readily given to their clergymen by many members of this congregation. There are many, I know full well, in this church who grudge no effort in advancing the cause for which I plead. The point which I am pressing is the need of every man and woman and child to take part in this work.

We need, and I think that we shall receive at your hands, the co-operation of the entire congregation. I hope and believe that you will take off our shoulders the burden of these new schools, and set us free to devote our time to the work for which God has called us in this neighbourhood. The harvest is indeed plentiful. More than five thousand souls living around the very doors of this house of God! Numbers of them, alas, are now bound fast in Satan's chains—a still larger number are so weighed down by the hard hand of grinding penury that they seem, in their dumb agony, to be pleading for some messenger of peace to bear into their homes the glad tidings of a Saviour's love, to lead their thoughts above the pain and poverty and woe of this life to that bright land where shall be no more trial, nor sorrow, nor sin—where God Himself shall wipe away every tear from our eyes. Set us free, then, my fellow-Churchmen from all these secular worries of begging and building, and let us try whether, by God's help, we cannot lift up in good earnest in these streets the banner of our crucified and risen LORD. Let us try whether, in reliance on His Divine Spirit, we cannot train in this

district a band of earnest, faithful men and women—true to their LORD, true to their Church—whose light shall so shine before men that they shall see their good works and glorify their FATHER Who is in heaven. But I must leave this merely personal appeal.

If we do what in us lies to train a child in the knowledge and love of God, and in the after years, by the exercise of its free-will, that child turns its back upon heaven, and is finally lost, we are not responsible for its perdition. If, on the other hand, we have failed to discharge, in behalf of that child, the responsibilities which GOD has laid upon us (observe I do not say the responsibilities imposed by our friends or our clergymen, but those which we feel are laid on us by GOD), if we have failed to discharge these heaven-sent responsibilities, then the blood of that child is on our head. It may, by GOD's mercy, be hereafter saved, but so far as we are concerned, we are verily guilty as concerning our brother. If, then, we are obliged to break up these Schools, what is the result? The more respectable children, of course, will be sent to other places of education, but those who most require the gentle influence of Christian training, what will become of them?

Are we prepared to hand over these little ones, for whom the Blood of our LORD streamed forth on Calvary—these little ones on whose foreheads His holy Cross was marked, whom He has redeemed to be temples of the HOLY GHOST? Are we prepared to hand them over one by one into Satan's keeping? Can we bring ourselves to send them out one by one into the dreary darkness of his kingdom to be schooled in all the villainy with which his offspring are familiarized? Shall those little hands, which once were clasped in prayer, be now trained to become expert in all the trickery of the handicraft of hell? Shall those lips, from which strains

of joy and praise might have arisen to the mercy-seat on high, be taught instead to pour out the foul stream of loathsome oaths and God-dishonouring blasphemy? Shall the feet which were created to speed hither and thither in works of mercy be made only swift to shed blood?

But you may say, "We cannot help, we have so many claims on our money that we cannot give, we have so much to do that we cannot spare the time to assist in collecting."

It may be so. God only knows. Thank God we are not obliged to judge. To his own Master each one stands or falls. Only hearken, men and brethren; we have read in the Holy Scriptures of one whose selfishness we have all condemned, from whose cruelty we have all recoiled. Let us take heed lest One greater than Nathan the prophet may even now be writing on the walls of our well-filled shops, our prosperous counting-houses, our luxurious homes, the startling verdict, "Thou art the man." There has come also unto us a wayfaring man, even the spirit of a prosperous, excitable, world-loving age. It runs near this spirit of the nineteenth century, with its myriad demands for the means by which self, in its varied forms of covetousness, or ambition, love of ease, or love of power, can be gratified. It asks of us time, money, life. Shall we spare to take of our own flocks and herds to slay for this wayfaring man that is come to us? Shall we refuse to reduce our own expenditure, to lessen our profits, to curtail the time which is spent on our worldly schemes, and shall we say instead, "Let the poor man's one ewe lamb be sacrificed"?—the little child that he has brought and nourished up, that lay in his bosom, and was to him as his own life. Let the poor man's child be left to perish. "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die."

V

HUMILITY

"Go and sit down in the lowest room."

S. LUKE xiv. 10.

IF you desire to rise to the standard of your high calling—to realize your glorious position in your will—cultivate lowliness and meekness. Continually the underlying thought of God's teaching for us is humility. It seems to be the grand difficulty of the spiritual life.

The devil's chief effort is to develop our pride. We can trace it in our LORD's words to S. Peter, when seeking to crush the pride by which he was being ruined: "Satan hath desired to have you," etc. We can see it in S. Peter's own Epistle: how he warns us to be "clothed," or girded, "with humility," and then reminds us to "be sober and vigilant, because the devil walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 S. Pet. v. 5-8.) S. James also, in one breath, bids us humble ourselves, and "resist the devil." (iv. 6-10.)

And if the devil seeks to develop pride in us, so also does the world. Vanity is despised; but pride—a "proud reserve," etc.—receives homage from the world.

Co-operating with the devil and the world, is the the old nature within us that never sleeps. We are proud of our money, our reputation, our cleverness, our children; even of our spiritual attainments: proud, sometimes, of our very humility! We sound a trumpet

before us, bidding our fellow-Christians on earth, and the saints in Paradise, and the holy angels, to gather round and see us, patterns of humility, sitting down in the lowest place !

And then, when God in His mercy lets us see our true state—when others take us at our word, and think little of us, when they speak of us as well-meaning people, perhaps, but silly, narrow, ignorant, prejudiced, “without much mind,” etc.—then, as by a lightning-flash, we see the true picture of self ; we find that we have again been conquered by the world, and the flesh, and the devil, which we had promised to renounce ; the old lesson has still to be learnt : “Go and sit down in the lowest place.”

Throughout the volume of inspiration God the HOLY GHOST seeks to press upon us this awful truth : “Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased.” In the Old Testament we read of the arrogance of Pharaoh ; of David, neglecting the recognition of the God of his Fathers in his proud numbering of the people ; of the army of Syria, dead, through Sennacherib’s pride ; of Nebuchadnezzar, driven from among men, because he forgot his true place, and dared to arrogate to himself the power and majesty of Jehovah.

And, then, in the New Testament, we read of Herod eaten of worms “because he gave not God the glory” ; and of that dear disciple who loved JESUS CHRIST conquered by cowardice, and weeping, broken-hearted, as the crowing of the cock reminded him that by his pride he had dishonoured CHRIST, and ruined, for a time, his whole spiritual being.

And not only by examples such as these, but also by direct warnings and exhortations, God teaches us the same lesson. The proud heart, the proud look, both are abomination to the LORD. “Pride goeth before des-

truction." "God resisteth the proud." (*Prov. vi. 17* ; *xvi. 5, 18, 19* ; *xxi. 5* ; *1 S. Pet. v. 5*, etc., etc.)

If, therefore, thou wouldest be safe and happy, out of the power of the devil, and in harmony with heaven—if thou wouldest one day rise to the highest position in God's Kingdom—"go and sit down in the lowest room," or, as it may more literally be translated, "the lowest place"—i.e., at the table spread by the host for his guests.

Two special illustrations of this truth may be given :

1. At the beginning of the Christian life. Of course, we are called, or "bidden," first of all, in Baptism ; but I speak now of the time when the soul first receives God's call to the conscious Christian life ; when it wakes up, either from the sleep of childhood—without any "sowing of wild oats" first—or from a life of open sin. At such a time, it is deeply important that this truth should be burnt into the soul : "Go and sit down in the lowest room." First, the valley of humiliation ; then, the climbing up to the mountain top.

The idea of most Christians is this : the soul awakes ; finds itself on a certain level ; sees something wanting ; discerns a new light from the world beyond ; sees that it must "make a new start"—lead a different life. All this is good ; but the mistake is this : the soul hopes to go straight to heaven by a bridge—forged not in heaven, but in hell—without going down first !

I have watched—I may almost say—hundreds of souls. I have seen them begin a new life, give up what they know to be wrong, come to church regularly, etc., etc. All, so far, was good : it was the work of God. But it was all marred by the want of remembering our text : "Go and sit down in the lowest room." The first step is this : go down into the valley, and stay there till God Himself says, "Come up higher."

If a man in debt promises amendment in future—if a prisoner, condemned to death, talks of influencing others, and warning them by his example—but ignores the past crime and the present danger, we regard him as a lunatic. And yet, believe me, debts against God are as real as debts against man. The crime of not loving God with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, will have to be accounted for, here, or hereafter.

This is the point where so many fail. They dream of “improvement,” but they know nothing of the valley of humiliation. They have never known what it is to lie low before God, crying, “God be merciful to me, the sinner! I have sinned! Thus and thus have I done!” They have never realized what is meant by “a broken and contrite heart.” They have never felt the touch of God’s hand, raising up from the dust; they have never heard God’s voice saying to them: “I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins.” They have never known the personal grasp of a personal God. Therefore, when trouble comes, they feel as if in the dark, without a living Friend near them; all their religion seems gone. Their house may be beautiful, but it is built on the sand. And so, when the storm arises, that house falls, and great is the fall of it; and people ask, “Why, with so much religion, was there so little power to support the soul in the day of trial?” Why? Because they had never gone to sit down in the lowest place.

2. The same principle holds good all through the Christian life. “Go and sit down in the lowest room,” and stay there till you die! Sit there quietly; do your work, and eat your food. That “lowest room” is the only safe place, for priest or people.

It is wonderful how we rebel against this—all of us; even those who are really trying to trust in a personal

CHRIST. Like the Galatians who wanted circumcision, to satisfy them, we want a repentance that will satisfy us, or feelings, or an outward morality, or some deep experience. In different forms, all of us are struggling for something to prevent our being obliged to stay in "the lowest room."

Of course, this must not be confounded with a desire for holiness—for a deeper repentance, etc.—which is quite right. No one who has been accustomed to the teaching here for a year can make this mistake. But so long as we are struggling to leave "the lowest room," we stop the flow of God's grace in our hearts.

If I could preach all day, I could not really teach this to you. Only GOD the HOLY GHOST can do it, by breaking down the old life in you. But it must be learnt !

When dark hours come ; when neither sun nor stars appear for many days ; when all past experience seems to have come to an end ; when you cannot feel, or pray, or love ; there is one thing that cannot fail you : the habit formed, of a fixed—almost dogged—submission to the Will of God ; the habit of remembering that God is in heaven, and we upon earth ; that He has a right to do as He will with His own ; that He is the Potter, and we are as the clay in His hands, to be moulded as He will. When we have trained ourselves to look upon every "trifle"—the worries of everyday life, the servants who disappoint us, the masters who are hard upon us, the troublesome people who will not receive our teaching as from God—when we have trained ourselves into the habit of submission of will, in every trifle, then we have something that will last in the day of trial.

A word in conclusion. Such a life is difficult, it is true. But there are, in the Bible, such manifold encouragements to this quiet, humble life !

Listen to the tender words of the LORD JESUS CHRIST Himself: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." "My yoke!" He pictures Himself—so humbly!—as one of a yoke of oxen, going on their monotonous round. On one side, He Himself stands, like the patient ox, in meek submission to the FATHER's Will. We see Him, full of enthusiasm, with the doctors in the Temple, yet quietly leaving them, and going down to Nazareth, to be subject to Joseph and His mother. We go on; we see Him left by His FATHER, without bread to eat, dependent on the kindness of a wicked woman for even a drop of water! (*S. Matt. iv. ; S. John iv.*) We watch Him in the agony of Gethsemane and the darkness of Calvary, spit upon, scourged, crucified—left without sympathy, without comfort! We hear Him cry to His FATHER, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And yet, saying, with the submission of perfect trust, "FATHER, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

Then, He points to the vacant place by His side, in that yoke, and says, "Come unto Me; take My yoke; learn of Me."

"My yoke!" I know how hard it is! The same yoke that I have taken on Myself! I submit to God; I submit to man; I take the lowest place; I have found My rest in doing My FATHER's Will, from Bethlehem to Calvary; and you will find your rest—there is no other way—in taking your place by My side.

And, then, if we do thus take His yoke upon us, there comes such a sense of the tender love of CHRIST, as He watches us under that yoke, suffering as He suffered (it matters not whether it be in what are called the "trifles," or the greater sorrows, of life); such a sense of His sympathy! "He Himself hath suffered." "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

There was one lesson that the Incarnate GOD had to learn! "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." (*Heb.* v. 8.) He humbled Himself under the mighty hand of GOD.

When we have learned in any degree this humble obedience, then we begin to realize what is meant by those words of unspeakable comfort: "We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." (*Heb.* iv. 15, 16; ii. 18.)

And as with the sympathy of JESUS CHRIST, so also with the love of the FATHER and of the HOLY SPIRIT. Though it would be wicked, proud, self-willed, to humble ourselves in order to gain something from GOD, yet if only we could train ourselves to take humbly the lowest place—to say simply, "GOD be merciful to me, a sinner"—then there would be nothing between us and the love of GOD our FATHER. There is no barrier between GOD and the humbled heart. To those who humble themselves under His mighty hand He can give such inexpressible strength, and peace, and power—when heart and flesh are failing—to look beyond this transitory life, and to see something of that "sea of glass like unto crystal," and of that glorious company of heaven!

Brethren, beloved in CHRIST, when the old nature is rising, when the proud spirit is being stirred by the world in any of its manifold forms, when Satan is tempting you by proud self-will to fight against GOD,

plead, with all the intensity of your regenerate being, to Him Who humbled Himself even unto death: "By Thine Agony and bloody sweat, by Thy Cross and Passion, from all pride, O good LORD, deliver me!"

If you wish to glorify God, if you wish to be of use in the Church, if you wish to find lasting rest to your soul, if you desire to begin and to go on and to end well, if you would be prepared for that "surprise of joy" when He Who is thy Saviour and thy King shall say unto thee, "Friend, come up higher," "go and sit down"—and stay—"in the lowest room."

VI

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

"Be ye followers of God."

EPH. v. 1.

THE right end and aim, then, of every intelligent human being is to be a follower of GOD, or, as it is more rightly translated in the Revised Version, an imitator of GOD. "Be ye imitators of GOD," says the HOLY SPIRIT, speaking by the mouth of the Apostle Paul.

When S. John had to strengthen the faith of the early Christians amid the entanglements of a fallen world, he was first taught to acquaint himself with the being and character of GOD.

He heard a voice, as of a trumpet, bidding him ascend into the heavenly places, and gaze upon the eternal Throne and the face of Him Who was to look on like the jasper and the sardine stone. He saw the emerald rainbow, the emblem of the mercy and refreshment which has come to sinful man through CHRIST our Redeemer. He saw the seven lamps of fire, symbols of the sevenfold gifts of the Blessed Spirit. He saw, in vivid contrast with the troubled waters of this world, the glassy sea like unto crystal, and, above the babel of human voices, he listened to the calm, never-ending song of an adoring creation: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD GOD, the Almighty, which was, and which is, and which is to come."

In sympathy with the beloved Apostle, let us also pause a while before we address ourselves to this difficult work of education.

If we desire to become, in any true sense, imitators of God in this matter, we must first acquire the habit of meditation. By reading and marking and inwardly digesting God's Word we must learn something of God's character, in order that we may fashion our thoughts and words and deeds after the pattern which has been shown us in the Mount.

MAY GOD the HOLY GHOST, "Who proceedeth from the FATHER and the SON, Who with the FATHER and the SON together is worshipped and glorified," so manifest His Presence amongst us this day, that our meeting may issue in His glory and in the strengthening of His power over our minds and hearts for JESUS CHRIST's sake.

There is, then, but one God—the living and true God—but there are three Persons in this Godhead : the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST.

GOD the FATHER is evidently set forth to us as the Model for every Christian parent. He is not merely revealed as a FATHER. The word, which specially belongs to motherhood, is also applied to our heavenly Parent. "Of His own will," says S. James, "He brought us forth" (He mothered us).

This Fatherhood of the first Person of the Blessed Trinity is made known to us, partly by what are called natural instincts, implanted in us by our Creator, partly by the direct teaching of the written Word, but more especially by the manifestation of GOD the FATHER, vouchsafed to us in the life and character of the Incarnate Word.

Let us, then, this afternoon consider the Fatherhood of GOD as the ideal for every parent.

If we desire to be imitators of God in our dealings with our children—

1. We must be reverent. A moment's thought would surely help to steady the most flippant young mother, if she could only be made to realize that, by His own election, she has become to her child the representative of God.

Imagine a parent, fully conscious that he is manifesting God to the little family that sit around him at the Sunday dinner! With what a sense of awe in the realized Presence of Jehovah would he put a stop to the idle talk about holy things, the careless criticism of God's ministers, which has done more, perhaps, than anything else to swell the ranks of infidelity, by robbing the members of a godly family of any belief in a religion which their parents can discuss so lightly.

2. We must be true. "This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God."

Natural instinct prevents the child from doubting a parent's word; but when once it has ceased to believe in its father or mother, the foundations of Christian education are practically destroyed, because the representative of God has lied. We shudder at the poor rough woman howling after her child in some back street, "I will kill you if you don't put that thing down"; and the thing is not put down, and the child is not killed.

Do not angels sometimes shudder at us, when our children are in the room, and every kind of courtesy and affection is heaped upon the parents' visitor, and then the visitor departs, and the pitiable round of criticism and ridicule begins, and the child is puzzled, and seems to ask, "What is truth?"

3. We must be real. Our sons and daughters are very generous in the allowance which they make for our

manifold defects ; but there is one type of character which is so utterly contradictory to the nature of God that, I had almost said, all faith in God and man is destroyed when the sons and daughters have detected it in the man or woman who stands in their midst as the representative of heaven.

What, for instance, can be the effect on a family of the unreality of the father who never neglects his place of worship on a Sunday, and comes to the front on every Christian platform, but whose son knows that, all the while, the dwellings of his work-people (his brethren in CHRIST) are being uncared for, who knows that, in the house of business, things which would not bear the light are being done on the week-day ?

What can be the effect of the unreality of a mother who never fails to utter the accepted religious shibboleths, but is quite prepared to sell her child to a godless husband because he is rich, or to break her child's heart rather than allow her to marry the poor man who is walking in the fear of the LORD ? What havoc must be wrought in a home by the unreality (my illustration is drawn from life) of the father who will quarrel with his son up to the very door of the church, and then come out at the end of the solemn service to finish with unabated temper the miserable squabble !

4. If we would be imitators of the Eternal FATHER we must be just. The favouritism which condones the wrong-doing of the attractive child, and is severe upon the failing of those who are dull and uninteresting ; the selfishness which prompts us to be unduly indignant at faults which are specially repellant to our own temperament, or which bring public discredit upon our home training ; the unfairness which is quick to note the one failure, but has no word of commendation for the many honest efforts after improvement : from these and such-

like snares may the good LORD deliver us! May He enable us at all times and in all places to hear the song of the victorious host who stand by the sea of glass with the harps of GOD: "Just are Thy ways, Thou King of saints."

5. Remembering our high calling, we must beware lest we lower the standard of that righteousness which proceeds from the Throne of the unchanging GOD. This is, to some natures, a very real temptation. As our children get older we recognize that a new individuality has been silently growing up in our home. Heredity, environment, and the like, have developed a being different in many respects from ourselves.

As this fact is slowly forced upon our attention, our natural love of popularity makes us crave for the approval of the son just returned from college, the daughter fresh from the training of the high school. Sometimes they will propound a theory which takes for granted that the old Bible-teaching need not be rigidly obeyed. They are themselves uncertain. They watch very narrowly for the reply which they may receive. Evil is it for their development of their obedience to GOD; evil is it for their respect to us as GOD's representatives, if, in order to be popular with our sons and daughters, we take a lower line than our conscience endorses, call evil good, and good evil, put darkness for light, and light for darkness.

6. But this thought must be balanced by another if the due proportion of GOD's truth is to be maintained.

In speaking to an intelligent audience I need not dwell at length upon one characteristic of GOD's dealings, by which our forefathers in the Faith were sometimes perplexed.

When we study the Bible as a whole under the enlightenment of the HOLY SPIRIT, we see clearly that

among heathen people, and even in the Old Testament Dispensation, God did not exact that high standard of obedience which He demands in these latter days.

"The times of ignorance," says S. Paul in his address at Athens, "God winked at," or, as it is more exactly translated in the Revised Version, "God overlooked"; and the same Apostle, in his Epistle to the Romans (iii. 24) explains that the Atonement of our Blessed Lord was necessary lest men should be deceived by the merciful way in which God had passed over transgressions, and should imagine on that account that He was not a righteous God, the High and Lofty One, Whose Name was Holy.

Here, then, is a principle well worthy of our consideration. When in God's infinite mercy our eyes have been opened to see the transcendent difference between things visible and invisible, when we have realized even the alphabet of the Gospel, when we have tasted something, at any rate, of the joy of forgiveness through the Precious Blood—have realized something of what is involved in having been baptized into CHRIST, of having had hands laid upon us at our Confirmation, of being allowed week after week to draw nigh to the Table of the LORD and to receive the ineffable gift, which His dying love provided for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls—when, in fact, we know anything of real religion, we are distressed if we see our children throwing away these blessed privileges, and given up even to the innocent amusements of a world which is passing away. We are upset if they are wearied with the long devotional exercises which bring strength and comfort to our own souls. We cannot rest till we have persuaded them to make an open profession of devotion to our LORD, to undertake Christian work, and so forth. All these feelings are natural, but if they are allowed to develop

unchecked, the result with our children will be either rebellion or hypocrisy. Our sons and daughters are tender, and "if we overdrive them, the flock will die."

It is the part of Christian prudence to meditate on God's forbearance with the world in its childhood—to consider our LORD JESUS CHRIST in His patient dealing with the slow progress and dull understanding even of His chosen Apostles; to watch against condemning as sin anything which, even if it be foolish, is not contrary to God's written Word; to manifest the divine love which is not angered by a slow response to our teaching; to take a real interest in our children's pleasures and occupations; to make friends with their companions; to respect, in fact, their individuality: then, tarrying the LORD's leisure, to wait quietly till, in answer to our prayers, His power is manifested in their behalf, and they learn in their own experience the expulsive power of a new affection.

It would be very interesting, if time permitted, to consider other principles of the divine economy in connection with education.

How full of instruction, for instance, is the principle of delegation, which is manifested both in the Old and New Testaments. How generously God associates human beings with Himself in the government of the world, handing over, as it were, His divine authority to kings and prophets and judges, to Apostles and pastors and teachers.

How different would be the results of home training, if, in this respect, we became imitators of our FATHER in heaven! How many a mother would deliver her daughter from the temptations of an aimless, useless life, if she were to put herself aside, and delegate to her child some of the responsibilities of the house! Instead of being jealous of their influence over our children, how gladly

should we take masters and mistresses, tutors and governesses into our confidence, regarding them as friends and fellow-workers in CHRIST. How, to the utmost of our ability, should we strengthen their hands. Instead of the careless way in which these our fellow-workers are selected, with what thought and prayer should we choose the nurse, the governess, the schoolmaster, to whom our care over our children is to be entrusted.

But I must hurry on, and content myself, in conclusion, with three brief hints.

1. "Parents," so saith the HOLY SPIRIT, "provoke not your children, lest they be discouraged."

As I go about from place to place, how often do I hear a Christian mother speak some word by which I know her daughter will be upset. It is quickly uttered, and the mother goes on eating her breakfast, utterly unconscious of the wound which she has inflicted; but it is not hard to mark the change in the girl's face—the half-vexed, half-hopeless look which that lack of understanding has provoked. How many a child has lost all its enthusiasm by some thoughtless sneer at its ideal, because it was badly expressed or perhaps somewhat exaggerated!

2. Treat your children not, as a whole, on one set system, but as individuals. One child differs from another child. Without individual sympathy and individual training, Christian education is impossible. God educates His children one by one. He has a different system for Abraham, and for Jacob, and for Joseph, and for David.

By separate methods CHRIST deals with the pride of S. Peter, and the passion of S. John, and the unbelief of S. Thomas, while a stake is driven into the flesh of S. Paul that his pride may be destroyed; that through the wounded flesh the power of God may enter into

his inmost being. Even so a wise parent will individualize his methods of education. "One by one shall ye be gathered, O ye sons of Israel."

Who does not remember the power of those few moments when his mother sat by his bed-side at night, and, with her hand in his, spoke wise and tender words, as if there was no other child save himself upon whom all his mother's love was concentrated?

3. Finally. When the Pharisees found fault with CHRIST, and declared that He could not be the SON of GOD because He welcomed those who were unworthy of His kindness, our LORD turned upon them with righteous indignation. "You know nothing," He seems to say (*S. Luke xv.*), "of the character of My FATHER. He does not wait for people to qualify before He bestows His mercy upon them. He loves them because it is His nature to love. He makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good. He sends His rain on the just and on the unjust. He is prepared for the manifestation of the crafts and assaults of that spirit of evil whom, in His mysterious wisdom, He allows for the time to hinder His divine work. He has given permission to the dragon to make war with the saints, and to overcome them, and to sow tares in the ground which He Himself has prepared for the heavenly seed." So, in His eternal calm, CHRIST seems to say, "My FATHER waits and forgives and loves and hopes. If the poor prodigal is driven at last by the husks of the far land to come a little way towards home, He runs to meet him, and stops his half-uttered confession with the cry of joyous welcome."

Christian parents, we can accept no lower standard than that which CHRIST has here enunciated.

"Be ye perfect, even as your FATHER which is in heaven is perfect." Give, looking for nothing in return.

As GOD your FATHER has loved and forgiven and blessed you, so deal with the unsatisfactory, irresponsible, apparently hopeless child. Whatever happens, look calmly at the powers of evil by which your work with that child is being hindered. That wayward son, that disappointing daughter, is the child of GOD.

On GOD, then, with humble reverence, let the responsibility of their life be cast. GOD has at His command eternal forces, beyond the ken of our finite understanding—an infinite reserve of forgiveness through the precious Blood-shedding of Calvary—an infinite power of restoration through the indwelling Spirit. With GOD all things are possible. Be it yours to watch and to pray—to love, not the soul which best rewards your trouble, but the soul which most needs your love, to hope with a hope which refuses to be conquered because it is based upon the unchanging Fatherhood of the Eternal GOD.

So loving, and so hoping, you shall, please GOD, either now, or in the day of His appearing, find that your labour has not been in vain in the LORD.

VII

PRIVILEGES

"Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see : for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them."—S. LUKE x. 23, 24.

WE are told, my brethren, in these words by the SON of GOD Himself that our position as Christians is a very remarkable one. However little we may think on the subject, however little gratitude we may feel towards our God for all His goodness, the fact remains the same. Many an ancient king would have gladly parted with his purple robe and have cast his royal crown to the ground if he could only have been allowed to hear the truths which are taught in every Christian school. Many a wise seer, many a grey-haired prophet would have burst forth with songs of joy if only he could have listened to the simple words which every LORD'S Day are uttered in every church throughout the land.

"For I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them ; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." My friends, have you ever thought of the meaning of this text ? Have you ever sat down for one quiet half-hour and tried to recall the blessings which you have received from your FATHER in heaven ? Too many never do so. Too many in this

Christian country, both rich and poor, live and die without ever thinking of the God Whose tender love has surrounded them with so many proofs of His goodness. They are too busy. The cares of this world take such hold upon their minds. They are so intent upon their farms and their cattle and their money-making that they have no time to think of God and heaven and the life eternal, that they have no time to think. How foolish is this—oh, what madness, at which the spirits of evil rejoice and angels weep, to see men marked out by God as His own children, enriched with all the blessings of heaven, preferring to grovel in the dust, choosing to sacrifice eternal happiness rather than lose a few golden coins, not one of which they can carry beyond the grave : like Esau of old selling their heavenly birthright for a mess of earthly pottage !

My brethren, do you not imitate such madness as this whatever your past life may have been, to whatever extent you (like your neighbours) may have been occupied with the vanities of earth.

Pray God this night to put away from you all worldly thoughts, and to fill your hearts with His HOLY SPIRIT, while I remind you of some of the blessings which He in His mercy has bestowed upon us.

1. Then, have you ever thought of the deep meaning of those words which we all know so well, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son” ? Have you ever realized the unspeakable mercy which is contained in that simple sentence, “He spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all ?” He, the Creator of heaven and of earth, Who reigns above far out of our sight, Who sends forth rain and sunshine, thunder and lightning, wind and storm, the Almighty God in Whom we live and move and have our being, Whom angels and archangels worship, and before Whose

glorious Throne cherubim and seraphim bow down in lowly reverence !—He has loved this world of ours. He, the High and Holy One, before Whose awful Majesty the very angels veil their faces and cry by day and by night, “ Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD GOD Almighty ” ; He, Who so hates sin that on account of it He banished Adam and Eve from Paradise, and swept away a whole world by the waters of a flood, and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven—this high and holy God has loved us in spite of our sins, in spite of our repeated rebellion against His Will, and He has shown this love not by words only but by deeds, not merely inviting us to return and offering to forgive us our sins, but by sacrificing His own SON and freely giving Him up for us all.

Sacrificing His own SON ! Brethren, is any one of you to whom I speak a parent ? Do you know what it is when the day’s toil is over to take your little child on your knee and listen to its baby talk and watch its baby ways and thank God for sending such a sunbeam into your home ? You then, perhaps, in some degree, can feel what a sacrifice it was to the great loving heart of God to give His own Child to die for us. You can imagine what sorrow He must have felt when He saw the Beloved SON in Whom He was well pleased taken by the cruel hands of a Jewish mob and nailed to a block of wood, and mocked and scourged and spit upon, His hands pierced, the blood pouring forth from His side, obliged to cry out in His bitter agony, “ Oh, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ” You who have a parent’s heart can fancy what the great Parent of all must have felt when He saw that heavy suffering and listened to that sad, sad cry. You can imagine how He must have longed for the salvation of mankind if He endured all that pain to save them from everlasting

misery. What a certain pledge of the Almighty's love for man is contained in the touching words, "He spared not His well-beloved SON, but freely gave Him up for us all."

For such a proof of GOD's love the best and noblest hearts of old were all yearning. Wise and holy men in every land were restless and dissatisfied, desiring some token for good, some sign that GOD was reconciled to His sinful creatures, some ladder on which their spirits could rise to heaven and rest in the sunshine of their FATHER's love. But this token was not given; their yearnings were never satisfied. These saints of old died in hope, yet did not receive the promise: "GOD having provided some better things for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Yes, brethren, without us: we are so familiar with the love of GOD that the words are often powerless to arouse even the commonest feelings of gratitude. Every Sunday we hear of it. Every sermon alludes to it. Every Christmas the angelic hymn peals forth in our ears, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, . . . for unto you is born . . . a Saviour, which is CHRIST the LORD."

2. Have you ever realized the still further proof of GOD's goodness which is contained in the words, "the Man, CHRIST JESUS"? It would have been easy for the Almighty to have sent His SON on earth and accomplished our salvation without clothing Him with a human body or making Him a partaker of our human nature. But how different would have been our feelings if the Saviour had been only the SON of GOD and not at the same time the SON of Man. He might have possessed all power and glory and goodness. He might have been equally ready to help us, equally able to supply our wants, but He could never have answered the deepest need of our hearts.

We are poor, weak, suffering creatures, and we require in our God some One into Whose ear our sorrows may be poured, some Friend on Whom our wearied spirits may repose, some One to Whom we can go with perfect confidence for help and strength. From the mere thought of God, true and holy and just, our sin-laden consciences cannot but shrink. He may bid us approach, He may stretch out His arms to receive us, but our first thought is, like Adam, to hide ourselves in the trees of the garden, or, like S. Peter, to cry, "Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man, O LORD." If, then, our God were only divine we should be like some child wandering on a lonely mountain. It may be surrounded by everything which is most grand and sublime. The thunder's roar may be heard and the lightning flash be seen, but these awful forms of nature only bring fresh terror to the soul : only make it long more intensely to see the well-known face, to hear the still small whisper of the old familiar voice, to reach the sheltered home where it may nestle on a parent's bosom and be at rest.

This characteristic of our human nature is known to God. He is well aware that the mere thought of a divine and Almighty King would only drive us from His Presence in fear and trembling. Therefore in His mercy He has given to us as our LORD and King One Who has been born of human parentage, and spoken our human speech, and felt our human trials, and loved us with a human heart. What a blessing it is that instead of terrifying you with the Majesty of God we can invite you to draw near to that Blessed Saviour Who was born as a little Child and said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not," that we can go to you in your poverty and your trials and say, "JESUS the SON of God was poor as you are poor. He was often thirsty

and hungry, and knew not where to lay His head. He can feel for your sorrow, for He was Himself a Man of Sorrows. He can help you in temptation, for He has known the pain of being tempted, and in heaven's high courts He still thinks of us, counts us as His brethren, says to every troubled spirit amongst us, 'I have borne your griefs, I have carried your troubles. Come unto Me, come unto Me, all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

To all these encouraging aspects of God's nature those who lived before the coming of our LORD were strangers. Till the manger was filled with the form of the Infant Saviour ; till JESUS was seen wearied with the long day's journey, asking for a drop of water to quench His thirst ; until mankind had beheld Him actually shedding human tears, and weighed down by human sorrows, and tried and tempted and agonized and dying, they could never have gathered the rich comfort which is contained in these glorious words, "the Man CHRIST JESUS"—could never have believed that the SON of GOD had in all things been made like unto His brethren, sin only excepted.

All this, however, brethren, is known to us. Though many an ancient king desired in vain to see it, we may behold it written on every page of the Gospel. Though many a holy prophet longed in vain to listen to the glad tidings, we can hear in any village school how JESUS CHRIST was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

Blessed are the eyes which see the things that we see, and blessed are the ears which hear the things that we hear, for "many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them ; and to hear the things which ye hear, and have not heard."

What more, then, could GOD have done for His

vineyard which He has not done in it? What proof of His love could have been conceived which He has not bestowed upon us? For us He has not grudged the sacrifice of His own Son. For our sakes He has made Him partaker of all the sorrows to which our human nature is liable. In Him He offers to us day by day everything for which our human nature craves. If any one enters the house of God whose soul is weighed down by the memory of past shortcomings, who feels that he has sinned beyond forgiveness, that for him the door of mercy can never be opened, that he must bear his heavy burden down to the grave and through all the long ages of eternity, to him He offers a full and free pardon. "JESUS," He says, "died for your sins."

In His Blood they can all be washed away. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved." Is there any one here who is weighed down by conscious weakness? Do you feel as if it were useless for you to struggle against sin, as if it were no good for you to try to be better? Do the cares and trials and temptations of life so press upon your soul that you despair of ever entering in at the golden gates, and wearing the golden crown, and joining the band of happy spirits who surround the Throne of God in heaven?

To you also, my desponding brother, your heavenly FATHER addresses Himself. He tells you that in the LORD JESUS all fullness dwells, that His strength can be made perfect in your weakness, that He can feel for you because He has suffered as Man, and help you because He lives as GOD. In all the changing scenes of life, in trouble and in joy, our FATHER gives this same Blessed

Saviour to comfort and support His brethren, to strengthen those who do stand, to cheer the weak-hearted, to raise up those who have fallen, to bear every weak and wayworn lamb in His own tender arms, and carry it safely through the rough and stormy pathways of this earthly wilderness. But this is not all ; not merely does God thus give His Son to us, but by every means in His power He tries to arouse us from our careless sleep, that we may open to the heavenly Visitant Who is knocking at the door of our hearts. He knows how easily our minds are distracted by the cares and vanities of the world, how hard it is for us to live a life of faith. Therefore from the cradle to the grave He endeavours, as it were, to open our eyes, that we may see the Saviour Who is so near ; to unclosethe our ears, that we may listen to the gentle voice which is calling us so lovingly to Himself. Therefore at our Baptism He puts us into CHRIST's Church, makes us members of CHRIST's Body, partakers of CHRIST's Spirit ; at our Confirmation invites us to give up our hearts afresh to the same Blessed LORD, to sign, as it were, our own foreheads with His Cross, and to pledge ourselves to fight for ever beneath His banner. At each celebration of the Sacrament of the LORD's Supper He offers us the broken bread and invites us to drink of the wine poured out, tells us that the Body of CHRIST was broken for us, that for us His Blood was shed, bids us feed on our crucified and risen LORD, that by that heavenly food our souls may be strengthened and refreshed. And when the dark shroud of mourning has been thrown around our hearts, when we stand by the open grave and listen to the last sad words, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," again God lifts our eyes to our crucified and risen LORD, tells us that CHRIST is "the Resurrection and the Life, that whosoever believeth in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he

live, and that whosoever liveth, and believeth in Him, shall not see death."

So is it, brethren, by His Church, His ministers, His Sabbaths, His Sacraments, our FATHER tries to lead our wayward steps to the foot of the Saviour's Cross, to guide us to Him Who is our only Deliverer from guilt, our only Comforter in trouble, our only strength in the dark hour of temptation.

How feeble is all human language, how powerless to express the love which our FATHER in heaven has poured down upon us. Blessed indeed are the eyes which see the things that ye see.

But dare we believe that GOD's goodness will prove a blessing to all on whom it is bestowed? Have you never read that to whom much is given, from them will much be required? Did you never hear that he who knew His LORD's Will, and did it not, will be beaten with many stripes?

If there be one spectacle more awful than another it is the sight of a human being who has been baptized into CHRIST, with whom CHRIST's Spirit has been striving; who has had the doors of CHRIST's church week after week opened to receive Him, to whom week after week CHRIST's Gospel has been preached, to whom month after month CHRIST's Body and Blood have been offered; and who, in spite of all GOD's love, in spite of all his Christian privileges, has turned away from GOD, has trodden under foot the SON of GOD, has counted the Blood of the covenant wherewith He was sacrificed as unholy.

At the Last Day it will be far better for the poor heathen who has never heard of a Saviour, who has tortured his body and slain his children because he thinks that such cruelty is pleasing to the god whom he ignorantly worships; it will be far better for him than

for any member of this congregation who has known the Will of God, and has refused to do it because he is too afraid of the remarks of his neighbours, because he is too fond of his pleasure, or his money, or his merchandise, to give up his heart to the LORD JESUS, and come boldly forward as a follower of the Saviour. The proof of God's goodness which we have received must be to us either a blessing or a curse. If we are trying to live to CHRIST, it is indeed a comfort to dwell on these signs of our FATHER's love : to feel that, in spite of our wayward, sinful ways, He still cares for us ; to feel that if He has given His own SON to die for us, if He has taken us as His own children, if He has sent his own Spirit into our hearts, He will never leave us till the trials of life are ended, never forsake us till we have entered into our eternal rest. But if we are living away from CHRIST, every day is adding to our condemnation, every fresh warning, every fresh pleading of God's Spirit, every fresh proof of His love, is adding to the load of mercy which will oppress our hearts for all eternity. Decide, then, brethren, at once for CHRIST. Waver no longer between two masters. Determine, by God's grace, no longer to slight your FATHER's love, no longer to trample under foot the blessed privileges which were denied to prophets and to kings, and are granted so freely to each of you. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

VIII

UNITY

"That they all may be one.

S. JOHN xvii. 21.

I BEGIN by directing your thoughts to the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle of S. Paul to the Corinthians.

It is a commonplace that the glory of God, and the good of the Church, and our own individual life, are hindered more by our want of unity than by any other drawback. Unbelief, of course, lies at the bottom of this, as well as of every other sin.

1. *The glory of God.* I need not dwell upon that thought. It was prayed for by the Blessed Saviour, in the last hours of His suffering life; and that great prayer is still being offered, "FATHER, glorify Thy Name" (S. John xii. 28), "that they all may be one; . . . that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." (S. John xvii. 21.)

2. *The good of the Church.* Every one who understands the relations of the Church to the State will, I think, admit that if only the Church could agree upon what she requires, she could obtain from the State all that is necessary for her development. In a few years this may be impossible. In a few years the constitution of Parliament may be different; but at present, if the Church were only united, there is hardly a single alteration which, as a united Church, she would ask in vain.

Again, the whole work of the Church abroad is being

hindered by this same want of union. Not merely does God often seem to refuse to use a divided Church, in that great work of evangelizing mankind; not merely does He say to us, as He said to David of old, "Thou shalt not build a house for My Name, because thou hast been a man of war"; but on every side money is wasted through the want of consolidation, concentration, and unity.

3. *Our own growth in holiness.* Charity is the very atmosphere in which the spiritual life grows and deepens. As well might you expect a plant to grow to perfection in a dark cellar, as expect a Christian to be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," unless he is filled with love to God and man; unless he walk in love, as CHRIST loved him, and gave Himself for him.

Our great object, then, should be to promote unity. How is this to be effected?

Clearly we must have done for ever with all idea of compromise; we are responsible before God for every fragment of truth which He has entrusted to us. The office of the whole body cannot be discharged unless each individual member is true to the separate revelation which it has received, the special office which has been entrusted to it by Almighty God. The hand, and the foot, and the heart, each has its own peculiar work. We cannot, we dare not, compromise. The whole teaching of the Bible is against it; and the Prayer Book brings out the same thought when, in the Office for Holy Communion, it teaches us to pray God to "inspire continually the universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord"; and again, that all they that do confess God's holy Name may agree in the truth of His holy Word, and live in unity and godly love; and again, in the Prayer for all Conditions of Men, "that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the Faith in unity of spirit, in the

bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." In all these passages truth comes first, unity second. We can have no lasting union, if it be bought by the sacrifice of truth. If we have known what it is to have faith in the Blood of CHRIST, we can never part with that old evangelical foundation which has brought joy and peace to our souls. If we have learnt the inward blessing of Communion, we can never go back to the state in which we perhaps thought lightly of that holy Sacrament. We cannot help holding fast that which we know to be true.

How, then, shall union be attained? One way alone can be suggested now.

Try to follow me here. You know we have two natures, the higher and the lower: the divine nature, growing up silently; the old Adam, gradually dying. Yes, we have an old and a new nature. The HOLY SPIRIT is ever teaching us that our true nature is the new nature. As Christians we are the children of God. We have been made "partakers of the divine nature." We have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem. We have been brought near to the angels, and united with the blessed ones in Paradise.

This is God's glorious message. The object of the devil is to drag us down into the mist and darkness of the lower life, by making us doubt the reality of God's great gift. But faith says Amen to every word of God; faith ignores the lower nature, except to keep it in subjection, that it may not rise up and triumph over the higher part of our being; faith banishes the darkness, not by fitful and spasmodic efforts, but by opening wide the windows of the soul to receive the light and the power and the glory of God.

Now apply this thought to the subject before us, as connected with that Holy Communion of which we are accustomed to partake. We desire charity. We cannot

make ourselves feel this divine love, but the service forbids us to come, unless we have resolved not to do or say anything which is contrary to the law of charity. Love, charity—the divine charity—is laid upon us as a duty that we are to study before we come. “Studying to serve Him in true holiness and righteousness,” etc. Hence the Prayer Book becomes to us a guide, how we can serve God. It warns us that mere zeal and enthusiasm, without charity, are of no value. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”

It bids us, before we receive that bread and drink that wine, to examine ourselves, whether the marks of charity are found in our hearts and lives. “Charity suffereth long, and is kind.” It “envieth not, vaunteth not itself.” It is content to remain where God has placed it ; silent, it may be, and unknown. It does not assume to itself the place of a ruler and a judge. It is “not puffed up,” because it has great joy and peace in believing. It is “not easily provoked.” It refuses to admit into the heart a scandalous report : “I told you he was not a true man,” etc., etc. It is content to be thought foolish, to be despised by noisy partisans ; content to be thought unsound in the Faith, and compromising and wanting in firmness, because it will not break the divine law of love, and grieve the HOLY GHOST, and forfeit the joy of fellowship with JESUS CHRIST. So are we bidden to examine ourselves by this great chapter—“and that not lightly,

and after the manner of dissemblers with God"—before we presume to eat of that bread and drink of that cup. Then, having come in this humble spirit—resolving, God helping us, to be charitable—the LORD JESUS feeds our soul with that spiritual Food whereby the higher part of our being is nourished and strengthened. We come, resolved to love, but unable to make ourselves love either God or man ; and then God pours into hearts so prepared the excellent gift of charity. We believe in the reality of the blessing ; we go away, resolved to stir up the gift which we have received, to manifest in our words and deeds the fresh grace which has been bestowed. So, by the incoming of the divine light, the darkness gradually vanishes. As the higher nature is thus strengthened, the power of the old unloving nature is slowly weakened.

Oh, my dear brothers, how hard it is ! How often we have all spoken wrong words, unkind words ! How many deeds of love we have omitted ! How little we have done to heal the wounds of our spiritual Zion ! God be merciful to us sinners ! The burden indeed is greater than we can bear.

Thank God that we may believe in JESUS CHRIST, and be at peace, as cleansed by His precious Blood. Thank God that as we eat the bread and drink the wine, we can receive the very grace which we need, the grace which will enable us to love our brethren, and bear with their infirmities, and make allowance for their failings ; which will preserve us from speaking one unbecoming word of those who are set over us in the LORD, and will keep us watchful and humble till the LORD return in His glory, to banish for ever all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, and to inaugurate that glorious dispensation where His own great intercession shall be answered for eternity, "That they all may be one !"

IX

THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY
GHOST

“And when He is come, He will reprove the world of . . . righteousness, . . . because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more.”—S. JOHN xvi. 8, 10.

WE know already that the Person to Whom our LORD refers in these words is GOD the HOLY SPIRIT, the third Person in the Blessed Trinity; so, taking the marginal reading of *convince*, as better for our purpose than *reprove*, I proceed at once to consider the work of the HOLY SPIRIT, which is here described. He was to convince the world of righteousness, because JESUS was going to His FATHER, and the disciples would see Him no more. Our LORD, you see, promises to His disciples that the HOLY GHOST shall come into the world, and shall give men a true conception of righteousness, by convincing them that the LORD JESUS is the one perfectly righteous Being ever beheld by the human race; and He further tells them the event of His life which the HOLY GHOST will use to work this conviction is the fact that He, the Saviour, has ascended into heaven—has been withdrawn from the sight of His disciples and has gone to His FATHER. “He *will* convince the world . . . because I go to the FATHER.” In dealing, therefore, with the explanation of this passage, we cannot do better than consider these two points:—

I. Why was it necessary that GOD should descend

from heaven in order to teach men the nature of real righteousness ?

2. How was this need supplied ?

The first inquiry is easily answered. When our first parents by their sin had put themselves and their children under the power of the devil, that spirit of evil, as was to be expected, used all his power and craftiness to destroy the likeness of heaven which God had stamped upon His offspring. It became the grand object of Satan's ingenuity to cast a veil over the eyes of the children of men, to teach them as far as possible to call evil good, and good evil ; and although God Almighty in His mercy did not allow the schemes of Satan to be entirely successful, still, he was able so far, at any rate, to prevail, as to give to mankind a completely false idea of the nature of real goodness and righteousness and truth.

If we study the history of the world before the coming of JESUS CHRIST, we find, amid much that was great and good and noble, one striking deficiency—no one was able to give a satisfactory answer to the simple question, "What is right?" In one country you would see a tyrant with no respect for time-honoured decrees, treading under foot the laws of heaven and earth ; emblazoning on his banner the bloodstained device, so dear to every despot's heart, "Might is right ; let who can, hold." In other conditions of ancient society you would hear the question differently answered. Many an old philosopher would reply, "What is right? Pleasure is right, happiness is the one object of life. Let us take our ease without a qualm of conscience. Life is short : the opportunity for enjoyment will soon give place to the time when the blood cools and the hair is silvered, and the withered frame crumbles into dust. 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.'" And once again. Even from those who belonged to a school with higher

aims, and guided their actions by a nobler rule than the tyrant and the pleasure-seeker—even among the men of uncorrupt morals and austere life—no answer would be forthcoming to satisfy the standard of the Almighty. If such a one were asked, "What is right?" he would point to his own conduct as pure in the eyes of men, as icy cold in the sight of God as the snow-capped peak of some lofty mountain range. He would boast of his unstained honour, his fair name untouched by the breath of slander. "Look unto me," he would say, if his thoughts were clothed in words. "Look at my pure and righteous life, and then you will know the meaning of the righteousness of God."

So was it, brethren, pleasure, power, outward morality, these were the only standards of right and wrong which fallen humanity was able to raise. Judged by such standards, men, who in God's sight were but wretched moral deformities, were raised by their fellows into the ranks of heroes. The divine ideal was lost, and no man was able to restore it back. If men were ever to learn the nature of real righteousness, God Himself, it was clear, must descend to teach it afresh. If ever a perfect model of truth and goodness was to be re-erected on earth, the Almighty must become the Master-builder and rear its divine proportions. Thus our first question is answered by the united voice of history.

3. We now come to the inquiry, How was this need supplied? How did God teach to men the nature of God-like righteousness? He taught it, brethren, by means of example. JESUS CHRIST, the SON of GOD, took on Him our flesh, and in the flesh condemned sin. Every thought, and word, and deed of His life was, in the highest sense, right. He lived amid the ordinary surroundings of men, exposed to the same temptations, corruption, and weakness, a thoroughly divine life, which

could not fail to heighten the standard of the world. He was GOD manifest in the flesh. Of Him, alone, of all those born of woman, it could be said in the fullest meaning of the words: "He hath done all things well." Here, then, was the world's need supplied by the living Model of a perfectly holy life. But the world was by no means willing to receive and act upon the heaven-sent Light which penetrated its darkness. Just as a person long accustomed to the foul atmosphere of a dirty, unhealthy room, will resent with indignation any attempt to let in a breath of purifying air, so the degraded human race arose with one accord to reject the example of righteousness GOD had sent into their midst. This was the condemnation that "Light had come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." JESUS CHRIST never thought of Himself: their whole thoughts were centred on self. His heart was set on things above: theirs on the gratification of their own needs, desires, and pleasures. They were covetous and fulfilled with worldliness: He had no earthly possessions, not even a place where to lay His head. They were proud and self-willed: He was meek and lowly, and His daily endeavour was to do His FATHER'S Will. So, because it was clear that one or other of these standards must be wrong, it seemed an easier plan for mankind, instead of reforming its own habits, to determine that the LORD JESUS was an impostor.

Accordingly, they banded themselves together and agreed that He was blaspheming GOD when He declared that He was the Divine Life: that He, the friend of publicans and sinners, was indeed the SON of the Most High, the heaven-sent Pattern of eternal righteousness. On this pretext they condemned Him to death, and nailed Him to the Cross: and then, when they had laid a great stone at the mouth of the sepulchre, sealed

it, and set a watch, they trusted His witness was silenced for ever. But GOD's voice is not so easily silenced as sinful men desire. JESUS CHRIST was content to be led as a lamb to the slaughter because it was part of the eternal counsel that His Blood must thus be shed for the sins of the world ; but He declared most clearly, alike to friend and foe, that His life was the only one with which God was well pleased. He set forth also most emphatically the test to which His words were to be subjected : "If I rise from the dead on the third day, and after showing unmistakable proofs of having been nailed to the Cross, I ascend into heaven, then you must acknowledge that My record is true. If I thus go to My FATHER and you see Me no more, then you will be compelled to admit that I have spoken truth, that you have failed in convincing Me of sin, and that I am indeed the Holy One of GOD." We all know, brethren, how completely our LORD's words were fulfilled.

Any well-taught child in our Sunday schools can tell you how JESUS CHRIST rose from the dead on Easter Day, and after forty days ascended into heaven to His Throne at the right hand of the FATHER. But one link was still needed—a means by which this convincing evidence should be brought home to the hearts of men, always reluctant to accept a truth by which their own conduct stands condemned. If JESUS was the Holy One of GOD, the life of every human being was proved to be sinful by the contrast it afforded to the life of GOD manifest in the flesh. This humbling teaching was naturally unwelcome ; it was far less galling to men's pride to hold on their course and forget all that had happened concerning JESUS CHRIST. GOD's thoughts, however, are not as man's thoughts. He determined that, either for their salvation or for their eternal condemnation, every human being should be convinced of

the righteousness of His beloved SON. So GOD the HOLY GHOST came from on high to work this conviction in the world. As the Apostles delivered their message, bore witness to the Resurrection and Ascension of the Incarnate LORD, the Divine Spirit brought home with mighty power to the hearts of their hearers the belief that it was in very deed the Holy One and the Just Whom they had denied, the Prince of Life Whom they had nailed to the Cross, the Anointed SON of GOD Whom they with wicked hands had crucified and slain. Thousands brought to their knees in humble repentance arose to walk in newness of life in the strength of that faith ; and now, though the age of miracles appears for a time to have passed away, the HOLY GHOST applies the Divine Life with such power to men's consciences, that hundreds of thousands have been enabled to turn to and trust in their Righteous LORD, upraising in fervent thankfulness the strain of joy and praise in our grand Communion hymn—"Thou only art Holy ; Thou only art the LORD ; Thou only, O CHRIST, with the HOLY GHOST, art most high in the glory of GOD the FATHER."

Thus, brethren, we have arrived, I trust, at some understanding of the passage before us. However little we may love the Blessed Saviour, the HOLY SPIRIT compels us in spite of ourselves to acknowledge His sinlessness, to testify that His was the only human life with which the FATHER was well pleased.

Those of us who are trying to follow in His footsteps know that, at best, we are unprofitable servants, only accepted through the Blood which cleanses from all sin. But what of the great majority of the baptized ? What must become of you, dear brethren, who are rejecting and living away from your Saviour, despising His example, His Sacraments, His Word ? Is it not clear that from those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed, nothing

less than the following of CHRIST will be required? Morality and uprightness are all very well, but they existed long before the birth of the LORD JESUS, and proved utterly worthless to justify men's souls. How is it, then, that—while occupied in the pleasures of a world that is passing away, in heaping up wealth that you cannot carry beyond the grave, in adding to the stock of earthly knowledge, which, however good in itself, can never save your soul—so little time in every day is devoted to careful study of the life of CHRIST, and prayer for the Spirit of CHRIST? The Pharisees did more than this! They were careful to keep the law, to attend the Temple services daily, to read and study the Scriptures, to fast and pray, and give a tenth of their goods to feed the poor; and yet our LORD declared, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Remember, I beseech you, beloved in CHRIST, that the words of the text must be fulfilled in the case of every human being.

In a very short time the careless members of every congregation will pass beyond the reach of human appeals, but the Word of God which is preached, and the Saviour Whose sacrifice is pleaded, will stand when heaven and earth shall pass away. In the hour when you and I shall stand before the Great White Throne we shall acknowledge before men and angels that the righteousness of CHRIST is the only righteousness which the Almighty will accept.

But oh, the bitter agony of that poor soul which shall then, for the first time, be convinced of this solemn truth—to feel that the decent, respectable life on which he prided himself, is utterly worthless in God's sight, because trust in, and love to, CHRIST, was not its motive power—to feel that he might have been pardoned

and accepted, clothed in the white robe of the Saviour's righteousness, but that he rejected the blessing, and now it is too late ! JESUS is no longer the loving Redeemer, but the righteous Judge, surrounded by angels falling low before Him, and singing the song of praise, "Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD GOD Almighty : just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints."

Is it not foolish, brethren, thus to provoke the Holy GOD to anger ? Are we stronger than He ? Is it not better to humble ourselves in the dust at His footstool, and acknowledge our guilt, that our boasted righteousness is as filthy rags in the light of CHRIST's pure life ? Let us seek honestly and earnestly to repent. Let us believe in the Saviour GOD gives us, and yield up ourselves to His service ; and then CHRIST's perfect holiness, instead of driving us to despair, shall become the foundation of our hope, the well of living water at which we shall daily refresh our wearied souls, cast down by the sense of our shortcomings, our wavering, inconsistent lives. Taught by the HOLY SPIRIT we shall not only see the Saviour's righteousness, but realize that His righteousness belongs to us. For us, we shall be enabled to feel under the Spirit's guidance, He kept the whole law of GOD. For us, He was obedient unto death. We who have believed in Him are regarded by our GOD as washed from our sins in His Blood, and clothed in His spotless robe. Buried with Him in Baptism, risen with Him through faith in His Name, the handwriting of a broken law blotted out in His Blood, our sins nailed to His Cross, we are complete in Him. He is made to us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "Thanks be to GOD, Who giveth us the victory, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD." Thanks be to GOD Who bids us rejoice with perfect confidence in the worthiness of His own dear SON, the LORD our Righteousness.

PART IV

THE MESSAGE OF JOY

“Commanding us to take possession of His glorious Kingdom.”

I

AGAINST THAT DAY

"I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."—2 TIM. i. 12.

THE details of this passage, taken from the last Epistle written by S. Paul, are full of interest, and the general import is easily understood. We see three things.

First of all, the Apostle says, "I know Whom I have believed." He states first, you see, that he has entrusted himself—body, soul, and spirit, all that he has and all that he is—to a living Person : GOD the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST.

You observe, secondly, that he does not expect this GOD to give an account of the deposit entrusted to Him until "that day," the day for which he was longing, when the LORD JESUS would come back in His glory, or when he himself would depart to be with CHRIST for ever. He does not expect the LORD to give an account every morning why He is doing this or that, or what use He is making of the deposit, or what He intends to do with him, body, soul, or spirit. He gives his LORD time—until "that day" ; and he waits.

Thirdly, he says that he has unbounded confidence in Him. He has a deliberate, settled, abiding conviction that the LORD GOD is faithful ; that, however

appearances might be against Him, He would justify His dealings in the day of His appearing. And therefore he waited, calm, steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the LORD, because he knew that his labour was not in vain in the LORD.

In these words of the Apostle we find the hidden source of the power of God's saints, in every age and in every land. There is a "strange family likeness" in the saints! Differing in outward circumstances, different in their own peculiar graces, their temptations, and their sins, there is still a strong family likeness. And here we find the secret of all their strength—of the victorious march of God's great army, from faithful Abraham down to the last spirit that has entered into rest.

The two main characteristics of the saints, in all ages, are these: endurance and joyfulness; suffering and thankful liberty. And perhaps the most striking illustration of this paradox is to be found in the life of the great Apostle by whom the words of my text were written.

Endurance and joyfulness! You find the paradox again and again in his Second Letter to the Corinthians. "We are troubled," he says, "on every side: perplexed, persecuted, cast down; always bearing about in the body the dying of the LORD JESUS." He seems to feel the sharp nails and pricking thorns from day to day. "Death worketh in us." We are "always delivered unto death." The outward man is perishing, day by day. He is "in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in labours, in watchings, in fastings." In fact, every word brings out that side of the life of God's children, in every age and in every land—the life of endurance.

In earlier days, when we first believe, "work" is the call. "Son, go work to-day in My vineyard." And

until we have begun to work for God, we are refusing to obey His divine call. But when this first great lesson has been learnt, and we have come forward to labour for our God, the work becomes the refreshment of our life—unless, indeed, we are wickedly breaking the laws of health, which many Christian workers are doing—by attempting more than we have strength to do : standing on a pinnacle of the Temple, and thus placing ourselves in the hands of the devil, in order to gratify our vanity by doing more than others. If we are walking humbly, and simply doing the work that we have strength to do, then our work becomes our refreshment, and the real battle of life becomes the battle of endurance.

In body, soul, and spirit we are liable to suffering. We are never sure any moment that some accident may not happen to our body, which shall rob us of all power of enjoyment in this life. Our minds may suffer at any moment, even if we are spared the utter loss of our reason, a trial which comes to many far better and far holier than ourselves. At any moment we are liable to those strange periods—with which those who are accustomed to watch the lives of others, as God's ministers, are, unhappily, too familiar—periods lasting, perhaps, for years, when all power of concentration of mind seems gone ; when there seems nothing but miserable carelessness, and mistakes, and failure on every hand. The heart may be wounded quite unexpectedly in its tenderest part ; wounded by those whom it loves ; wounded with a deep wound which will never be healed in this life.

All the saints of God would tell you the same thing. There have been periods when the spirit—for years, it may be—seemed to be cleaving to the dust ; when there seemed no power of realizing God's Presence, no power of crying anything but " O my God, if it be possible, let

the cup pass from me !” or the cry of Calvary, “ My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? ”

More than this ! the mystery of iniquity works ; not only the mystery of suffering. There come periods when power seems to be given to the devil to “ overcome ” the saints. (*Rev.* xiii. 7.) The Christian man has been indulging pride, we will suppose ; or has been allowing some want of love to grow up all unobserved in his heart. He has had unkind feelings, and he has not burnt them out with the fire of God’s Spirit. And so—in love to his soul, that it may be saved in the Day of the LORD—GOD allows him to fall, as He allowed S. Peter to fall : not to be utterly lost, but to fall by some awful degradation that shall startle him out of that pride or out of that want of charity, and bring him humbly to the feet of his LORD, as S. Peter came to be forgiven, to be reinstated, to be again sent out as the ambassador of the Crucified.

My brethren, it is wiser to look facts in the face. All God’s people are liable to this suffering at any time. None, except the very young with good health, and those who have deliberately given themselves over to the devil, are free from this great law of suffering. Body, mind, heart, spirit, may all at any moment be laid low, so that nothing shall remain for the Christian man or woman but to lie at the feet of the Crucified, as one “ dead.” (*Rev.* i. 18.) From the day of the Crucifixion to this morning, endurance of suffering is the law of God’s people.

How, then, are we to endure, unless we know there is a living Being, “ of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness,” as the First Article of our Church expresses it, Who has revealed Himself to us as the FATHER, the Husband, the Friend, the Brother ? How are we to endure, unless we know that there is such a Being, and

have, like the Apostle, given ourselves absolutely into His hands?

Then, when the fresh trial comes—it may be suddenly—we shall only require a few days to readjust ourselves, as it were; to go back to the Bible and receive the old strength and comfort; and then we shall be able to say, calmly and quietly, “This is a surprise, I never thought the trial would come in this form. But God is faithful. I know Whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He will keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.”

But there is, thank God, another side of the Christian life. It is brought out in the Collect and the Epistle and the Gospel for to-day.¹ The Gospel teaches us that the ideal of the Christian life is a “marriage,” with the bright lights and the joyous music. It tells us that the very opposite to that ideal is the spirit of bondage—“bind him hand and foot”—the darkness, the morbid melancholy, the weeping and remorseful gnashing of teeth. And the Epistle teaches us that the characteristics of the Christian life are joy and gladness; the “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your hearts to the LORD; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the FATHER, in the Name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST.” And the collect that the Church is praying through Christendom to-day asks God Almighty, of His bountiful mercy, to give us grace to be so free, so ready in body and soul, that we may “cheerfully” accomplish those things that He would have us do.

How this spirit of joy and thanksgiving comes out in the lives of the Bible saints, you have often been reminded. They went on their way tortured, perplexed, distressed, seeming to the world only like “babblers”:

¹ Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

making mistakes ; failing at every turn ; and yet “always rejoicing.” “Rejoice in the LORD always, and again I say, Rejoice. I thank my GOD always.” This is the ideal of the Christian life ; the ideal that was realized by the Apostles, and that has been realized, since their day, in the lives of thousands of poor suffering, tempted members of the mystical Body of CHRIST.

But do you not see, at once, that the realization of this ideal is an impossibility, until the lesson of my text has been learned ?

Let us suppose that we are thoroughly in earnest, all of us ; that we have given up ourselves to work for GOD ; that we have no other wish but to do His blessed Will ; yet how can we be “always rejoicing,” so long as we are exposed to the fiery darts of the devil—so long as he can transform himself into an angel of light, and turn the very teaching that helped us in bygone days into a weapon for our destruction, or at least for the hindering of our growth in grace ? How can we be “always rejoicing,” so long as we are liable to feel that we are being laughed at, or that we may have done real harm to GOD’s Church, or that we may have to come forward on some great occasion, with perhaps the destinies of hundreds placed in our hands, and to go back ashamed of having made a miserable failure and simply talked nonsense ? How can we be “always rejoicing” so long as we are liable to be made utterly helpless in body, soul, and spirit any moment ?

What will be our natural life, so long as we are liable to all this, if we are left to ourselves ? Surely it will be this, the life of thousands of communicants in the present day : morbid, spending their strength in miserable retrospect : wondering whether they made a mistake yesterday or the day before ; whether they committed that sin, and whether it was really a sin ; or thinking, “Suppose I

kneel down and try to pray with others, or teach in a Sunday school, or visit in a district, and fall back again, failing as I have failed before? What harm I shall do! Had I not better keep back and run no risk? You see them going about, so careful, so watchful—and this is good in itself—but so frightened lest they should make a mistake, that they live and die without ever having launched out “into the deep,” or made any real venture of faith for CHRIST and His Church. They are saints of GOD, but so morbid, so melancholy, so hindered by the perpetual introspection of self! They seem as if they had to do with some hard, austere master, like the task-masters of Israel, walking up and down the parish, only longing for an opportunity to find a communicant doing something wrong, that he may scourge him; instead of a Father, loving His children, seeking to find out something He can praise; forgiving them freely, taking into His arms the poor child that has fallen, and comforting him. How, I say, are we to escape from all this, unless we have learned the lesson of the text: “I know Whom I have believed”?

It was the fact that he had learned this lesson which gave such a magnificent power to the Apostle Paul. It was this that gave him such a power that he went forth ready to suffer anything for CHRIST’s sake, if only he could save others, for whom the Blood of his dear LORD had been shed. He knew to Whom he had entrusted himself. He knew into Whose hands he had put the preaching and the praying and the working. He knew unto Whom he had committed the mistakes and the failures, and the apparent injury done by those failures to the Church. “I know Whom I have believed.” I may make a mistake, and talk of religion when I had better be silent; or I may be silent when I had better speak; or I may attempt a bit of work, and only stand

as an example of failure to the entire parish. What matters it? "I know Whom I have believed." I have committed my cause to Him; and at the day of His appearing He will explain to me the apparent failure; He will teach me the meaning of the hard discipline. I know Him; and "I am persuaded that He is able [and willing] to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Oh, brethren, beloved in CHRIST, this is what we need: the power to endure; power to bear the dark time; power to believe that out of the endurance and the bitter pain, be it in body, soul, or spirit, will come strength by which souls shall be converted in the Day of the LORD.

Faith and patience! These are all that are left to the saints in a wicked world. It is this we need. The joyous spirit singing and making melody in our hearts to the LORD; giving thanks always for all things unto GOD, even the FATHER, in the Name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST; trusting our own souls to Him; and so ready, both in body and soul, cheerfully to accomplish, every moment, what He may will that we should do or suffer.

Away, then, with all that bondage-spirit! Away with all the self-seeking and remorseful gnashing of teeth for mistakes, or negligences, or sins! Back to the Precious Blood that cleanses from all sins! Back to the power of the indwelling Spirit, Who can overcome evil with good! Back to the arms of the Eternal FATHER, Who is waiting to receive us!

And then, one and all, old and young, let us go out to spend and be spent: to bear bodily trial, to bear the weakening of the mind, the feebleness of mistaken judgment, the secret sorrow known only perhaps to our God, the dark, dreary years when the life of the spirit seems gone, and nothing remains but the mechanical utterance

of former prayers. Let us go out, to endure, to work, to win for Him Who died for us the thousands in London who have never heard His Name ! Let us go out in the Name of the Crucified, with the heavenly banner waving over our army, and on it inscribed the grand dying utterance of the Apostle Paul : " I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

II

JOY FROM SORROW

"Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."—S. JOHN xvi. 20.

LIFE, joy, victory! these are the key-notes of the Easter festival. And gladly do our hearts unite in the great chorus of Hallelujahs with which heaven's high courts resound on days like these. For man is born with an instinct—it is the pledge of his immortality—that can rest satisfied with nothing short of life and joy and triumph: life never-ending; joy never-failing; triumph eternal.

We are right in anticipating this. But the mistake we make consists in our accepting, as we are so often tempted to accept, a half-truth. We will not lay hold of the humbling fact that we do not belong to the kingdom of angels, but of men; that this life is only the threshold of the true life; that here we are not only being educated for a service that shall last on through all the eternal ages. We are too proud to accept the humbling fact that into this world sin has entered, that there is something on earth which mars the perfection of the divine ideal; that our pathway, so long as we tread this lower earth, must be through thorns and briars, which have to be pushed aside with a bleeding hand and a breaking heart. And, therefore, JESUS CHRIST, "the Truth," while recognizing the fact that man was born for joy, balanced, as it were, his expectations.

What a contrast we find—in passing—between the real character of our LORD and the representations of that character with which we are surfeited nowadays by shallow sceptics! A self-deceiver; a mere enthusiast; a good man, but carried away by His emotions: this is the idea given in many popular books of the character of our CHRIST!

Is this like a self-deceived enthusiast? Calmly and quietly He lays His hands, as it were, upon the fevered heart of His disciples, saying, “Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” You shall have joy, but first sorrow. You shall have life, but first death. You shall have victory; but you must pass to your triumph through many an apparent failure, through many a humbling defeat. “Ye shall be sorrowful.”

This, my brethren, is the principle of life, which I desire to bring before you this morning. There must be sorrow before the joy. There must be death before the life. There must be apparent failure before the victory.

Observe, first, how the facts of the Resurrection witnessed to this truth of JESUS CHRIST; how completely this prophecy of my text was fulfilled on that Easter morning.

Watch Cleopas and his friend on their road to Emmaus, discoursing together, perplexed, bewildered, their minds racked with anxiety, so that the Stranger Who approached them could only say, “What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?”

What is the experience of the Magdalene? Watch her in that garden, alone, weeping, unable to say more than those sad words: “They have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid Him. . . .

Tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Worse than the experience of Cleopas—worse than the experience of the sorrowing Magdalene—watch S. Peter. See him hurrying out of that judgement-hall, the tears rolling down his cheek. Watch him on the night of the Crucifixion. Do we not seem to see him standing alone on Calvary, gazing on those three crosses? "O CHRIST, I have sinned! I denied Thee with cursing and swearing, my Friend, my Master, my LORD, my GOD! Would that I had rather hung on one of those crosses by Thy side!"

The whole of Easter Eve was filled with sorrow, with death, with apparent failure. The world, the flesh, and the devil appeared to have triumphed over the CHRIST and His disciples. "Ye shall be sorrowful." Verily, the words had been fulfilled!

And then, as the gladdening sunbeam breaks upon the darkness of night, then life, joy, victory! Cleopas and his friend, they see One breaking bread and blessing it; their eyes are opened, and they go on to Jerusalem with joy, to say that CHRIST has risen! The Magdalene, one word, the old familiar name, linked with the memories of years of joy such as she had never known in the days of worldly enjoyment and pleasures; one word from the Master, and her heart throbs out the glad response, "Rabboni!" And S. Peter, the first Easter message, "Go . . . tell His disciples, and Peter," he will need the joy the most. And then the fire prepared by JESUS Himself on that bright morning by the Sea of Galilee, and the food prepared by CHRIST's own hands; and then the commission: "Feed My sheep"; within a few days of that hideous fall, sent out to feed His sheep, to be the Apostle of humanity! Verily the words of the LORD were fulfilled. They

had been sorrowful ; but this sorrow had been turned into joy.

Secondly, our LORD's words contain a principle for practical life : a principle which will balance our minds, calm our enthusiasm, correct our mistaken judgements, uplift our sinking hearts. "Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." We must be sorrowful, if we are ever to have the joy that God would give.

1. It is true, first of all, for every man who believes in God, for all the workers and thinkers who, in the power of God, are trying to leave the world better than they found it. Every man who is at all in advance of his age, every one who either in the realm of thought or of action is trying to elevate humanity, has trial : attacks from within and without, that he is obliged to bear ; misrepresentations ; wonderings of his own spirit, whether he is deluded, whether he is not injuring the cause that he is trying to advance, whether the mistakes that he has made will not do more harm than all the good that he may have effected in his life. Brothers, you are sorrowful. You must be, so long as you live in this world of ours. But hold fast to right principles, whether it be in Parliament that you are working, or in the walks of philanthropy, or in the great marts of commerce. Hold fast to right principles, though you stand alone. Do what God, speaking through your conscience, endorses, and bear the pain.

"Courage, brother, do not stumble,
Though thy path be dark as night :
There's a star to guide the humble ;
Trust in God, and do the right.

Some will hate thee, some will love thee,
Some will flatter, some will slight :
Cease from man, and look above thee ;
Trust in God, and do the right."

Workers, thinkers, all who believe in a God and are trying to do God's work, in every walk of life—

“Cease from man, and look above ye;
Trust in God, and do the right.”

Be sorrowful! Your sorrow will be turned into joy. You may be nearer the accomplishment of your divine purpose than as yet your doubting heart would dare to anticipate. Those who are familiar with the world of physical science—when some wonderful discovery was impending—the preceding generation of thinkers has been generally disturbed. Like some wave of the sea that you have watched flowing on with an uneasy throbbing motion to the shore, so this tide of thought has moved on with an uneasy throbbing motion, the great thinkers feeling as though the discovery for which they were panting were about to elude their grasp. And then, as that wave of the sea finds its appointed haven, so that tide of thought finds one intellect prepared and disciplined by God to receive it; and the wave breaks out into sparkles of light and truth, and the world rejoices in some new and stupendous discovery. So shall it be also with you, my brethren. Be sorrowful! It is only the night, before the morning; it is the heaviness, before the joy of triumph.

2. Still more does this apply to those—and, in its deepest sense, to those only—who have yielded up their hearts to JESUS CHRIST; to those who have given themselves, with all the darkness and all the failure and all the sin, as honestly as they know how, into the hands of Him Who died and rose again. If your soul has really ever been stirred, you must have had to pass through, or you are now passing through, death, sorrow, consciousness of failure.

The great Apostle of the Gentiles describes his ex-

perience thus : "I was alive, without the law once." In other words, "There was a time when I was contented with myself ; when I was doing all that was right, and all my fellow-Israelites were praising me, as a man far above my fellows, for my deeds of goodness and of virtue. And then came the breaking down of that fair ideal, 'When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' The law of GOD was revealed to me ; I saw what GOD was ; and in the light of that glory of GOD, I abhorred myself, like the patriarch of old, as dust and ashes. 'Sin revived, and I died.'"

Till we have thus died with the Apostle, we know nothing of the joy that Christianity can impart. If any of you are passing through this, Satan whispers, "It is no use, you cannot pray ; you cannot feel ; you cannot love ; you cannot conquer. It is all defeat. The world and the flesh and the devil must have their way. It is too late. You have wasted your life. You have committed too many sins ever to be forgiven. It is impossible." The Apostle Paul felt the same temptation. But he persevered. He lay at CHRIST's feet three days and three nights in the darkness, unable even to eat the food that was set before him. But the word of the CHRIST was fulfilled to him : "You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

Brother, persevere ! Lie "as dead" at the feet of the CHRIST day and night. Whenever thou hast opportunity, say, "LORD, Thou hast died for me ; have mercy on me." And presently—believe one who has had to pass through it himself—out of death shall come life : out of the sorrow will come the joy ; out of this utter, crushing, hopeless sense of defeat, will come the glorious consciousness of Easter triumph, by the power of the CHRIST Who died and rose again. Rest not, my brother, till thou knowest this joy and peace of believing.

3. And, lastly, let me speak to those who have long ago believed, to those who have long since fought out this battle into light and joy.

Brothers, sisters, we cannot escape. We cannot escape from the burden of a fallen humanity. At times, when all seems bright, we may cheat ourselves into the idea that we are to escape the lot that is common to man. But it cannot be. Satan will touch those we love. Satan's blight will come on our own spirit. Sins that we had forgotten will rise up to torture us with the sense of failure and defeat. The stronger you really are—the more earnestly you are fighting, the more true your Christianity—the more your heart will echo back what I am saying. Again and again the cry will arise, "O LORD, how long? How long am I to fight, and yet be conquered? How long is sin to slay those that Thou hast given into my care?"

Brothers, we cannot escape from suffering with JESUS CHRIST. Heaviness must endure for this life. But this life is but the night, and the joy is coming; certain to come, because the CHRIST has said it. However perplexing may be the great riddle of life—however your hands may fall down and your knees totter beneath you, as you go forth in the Name of the Crucified to fight the LORD's battle against the threefold foe—take home the words of the text: "Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." He that died for you loves you. He Who rose again for you conquers in you. You shall triumph, for you are fighting in the Name of the risen and crucified LORD. The LORD GOD Omnipotent is with you. The CHRIST Who rose again has said, "Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." Yes, the darkest hour of our life, when everything, it may be, seems sinking beneath us, shall be the moment when the voice of God's own blessed angel shall whisper into our

hearts, "The morning is come ; listen to the song of the birds ; watch the bright, gladdening sunbeam ; the Master is here ; the Advent of the King has come ; thy LORD is here ; He calleth for thee !" Oh, brothers, be strong ! Let us fight the fight, let us bravely endure the sorrow, that we may rejoice together on the shores of that crystal sea, in the great Resurrection-feast of the new Jerusalem !

III

THE POWER OF INTERCESSION

"I pray . . . for those whom Thou hast given Me ; for they are Thine."—S. JOHN xvii. 9, R.V.

MY brethren, we are not straitened in God, but in ourselves. We have not, because we do not fully use the privilege which has been entrusted to us all—laymen as well as clergy—for all the confirmed have, through the laying on of hands, received the HOLY GHOST for this office and ministry.

With this conviction I shall not consume these precious moments in dealing with those parts of the subject which, though interesting, are theoretical rather than practical. It is obvious to any thoughtful man that if intercession involves the approach of a finite being to the Infinite God, it must be encompassed with difficulties which in this world will never be completely solved. There is nothing to be gained this morning by dwelling upon them in detail. I desire rather to kindle in myself and in all to whom I speak, an increasing desire to help forward the work of CHRIST'S Church in the way which He Himself has prescribed. I shall be indebted in what I have to say to many writers, such as Dr. Pusey, Bishop Gore, Dr. Andrew Murray, and others. In order not to hinder the general course of delivery, I make these acknowledgements at the beginning rather than at each separate place in which their words are quoted or their ideas reproduced.

I begin by casting myself upon the HOLY SPIRIT, the LORD and Giver of life, beseeching our heavenly FATHER so to guide and restrain and bless my words, through the indwelling of that Blessed Spirit, that the words spoken may be according to His Will, and issue in His glory ; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

It is not, I think, difficult to demonstrate the need of intercession in this nineteenth century. When we think of the unchristian divisions of a once united Christendom, and the dishonour to our Blessed LORD and the injury to His Church which these divisions involve ; when we hear the rumours of war even now sounding in our ears ; when we think of the sins by which Christian nations are disgraced, the drunkenness, the impurity, the adultery, the greed for gain, the indifference to the claims of GOD, the neglected Bible, the wasted Sunday, the pitiable jealousies of class against class ; when we steadily fix our minds upon the way in which the poor, with whom CHRIST has identified Himself, are still neglected, in spite of all the improvements which have been made in their condition, the miserable dwellings, the unnecessary limitations which hinder their true development—physical, mental, spiritual ; when we look on into the dark realms of heathendom with its pitiable degradation, its unutterable cruelty, its awful submission to the dominion of Satan ; when, without ignoring all that is hopeful in modern life, we try to grasp the magnitude of the problems—social, political, educational, ecclesiastical—by which we are confronted, we are driven in our very helplessness to intercede with all the strength of our regenerate will to that GOD with Whom nothing is impossible.

It would be interesting also to speak of the encouragements to intercession which any careful student of spiritual facts has collected. Without dwelling on Bible

history, the victories won by the prayers of Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Hezekiah, and the like, we have seen and known, in our own day, of thousands of pounds vouchsafed in answer to united supplication : we have seen again and again the sick man lying on what appeared to be the bed of death, given up by the human physician, and then restored in answer to the prayer of faith.

To-day, however, I pass over the needs for intercession and the encouragements which God has given to its faithful exercise. Neither will I occupy your time by detailed lists of subjects nor practical directions. For these I would refer you to Bishop Andrewes' well-known devotions, to a handbook of intercession and thanksgiving (*Sursum Corda*), published by Mowbray & Co., and a small work published by Wells Gardner, called *Instructions in the Devotional Life*. I venture rather this morning to suggest a line of thought which, if carried to its logical conclusion, must land us in the alternative of forming and maintaining a habit of *definite* intercession, or of deliberate neglect of the revealed Will of God.

I. "Baptism," we are told, "doth represent unto us our profession: which is, to follow the example of our Saviour CHRIST, and to be made like unto Him." It is hardly too much to say that our Blessed LORD's entire life, from His Baptism to His Ascension, was one long intercession. He prayed for individuals. He looked at S. Peter, and warned him that the pride which has been secretly cherished for many years must be crushed by a humbling fall ; but assured him that He had interceded, lest, after his sin, he might be driven into the despair of unbelief. He prayed for the whole college of Apostles in that long night which He spent alone with His FATHER on the lonely hill-side before their ordination. "It came to pass," we read, "in those days, that He went out into

a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named Apostles."

In the dark hours which preceded His Passion—when His Soul was oft-times troubled, and He was tempted to ask His FATHER that He might be delivered from the conflict of Gethsemane and the desolation of Calvary—even then He set us an example of intercession. In that mysterious supplication, in which we seem already to have entered within the veil, and to be standing in the Presence of the Eternal God, He said, "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world. Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy Word. I pray for them. I pray for those whom Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine. Holy FATHER, keep them in Thy Name. Keep those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them from the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." And, as He prayed, His mind went on to contemplate the great company of believers who should fight the "good fight" until the day of His appearing. "Neither for these alone," He says, "do I pray, but also for them who believe on Me through their word." And then His prayer, if we may so speak with reverence, seems inspired with fresh confidence as He claims the reward of His Passion. "FATHER, I will that, where I am, they also may be with Me; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me." Finally, on the Cross in the midst of His agony, He interceded for His murderers—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

2. This intercession of our Divine Redeemer is still

going on in the heavenly Kingdom. Intercession is spoken of as though it were the object of His life in heaven. He, "on account of His abiding for ever, has His priesthood unchangeable"; and therefore "He is able to save to the uttermost those who approach unto Him, ever living as He does to make intercession for us." And, again, He hath entered into heaven itself, into the visible Presence of God, there to be manifested to the face of God for us; there, face to face, to be Himself, by His very Presence, our Intercessor with God. And yet again, "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us."

It is an interesting question whether our LORD intercedes by His silent Presence before the FATHER, or whether, in the words of an old writer, "He intercedes, not merely by a silent conveying but by an open and express representation and manifestation of His Will." It matters not: one thing is certain. He Who prayed for us while He was on earth—He Who died and is alive, He Who liveth for evermore—still pleads for us in one unbroken intercession.

That which our LORD practised in His own life, He has laid upon all who believe in His Name, as a primary duty no less than a surpassing privilege. When His heart was moved with compassion for the multitudes who were distressed and scattered as sheep not having a shepherd, instead of using His divine power in providing the shepherds whom they needed, instead of, by an act of omnipotence, Himself supplying their every need, He summoned the little band of disciples, and commanded them to intercede. "Pray," He said, "pray ye the LORD of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." In the prayer, which was intended

not merely to be used in our private and public devotions, but to be, for all time, the model of Christian supplication, He delivered His people from that natural self-centredness which is the curse of a fallen nature, by commanding them, whenever they prayed, to practise intercession. "When ye pray, say, *Our FATHER*, . . . Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done *in earth*, as it is in heaven."

The petition for daily bread, for forgiveness of sin, for protection from temptation, from deliverance from Satan, is not limited to the individual worshipper, but includes, in its range at least, the whole Church dispersed throughout the world. May we not add, the whole Church resting in Paradise, and waiting for its perfect consummation and bliss? May we not go further, and say the entire human race? In the words of a great master of the spiritual life, "There is a very heartless way of saying our LORD's Prayer, and so also of many common public prayers which have been framed upon it. The people rather use one prayer in common, each praying for himself in it, than one common prayer, each for all. This, of course, is a great loss, and contrary to the mind of CHRIST. If the LORD's Prayer be rightly used, then if five hundred people pray together, whenever they say, 'Forgive us our trespasses,' or, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' or, 'Lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil,' each prays for all those present under the word 'us.' Then each will have had five hundred prayers for himself; for each five hundred voices will have gone up to the Throne of GOD; for each, in those five hundred prayers, the HOLY GHOST will have interceded; for each those intercessions will have been united with the perpetual intercession of the Divine Intercessor. Those great words," he continues, "'Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy

Will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,' are manifestly co-extensive with the whole world." They pray for the extension of the Church, and for the conversion of the heathen, of Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics. They pray for the well-being of the Church, that CHRIST may indeed reign in the hearts of all those whom He has made members of Himself, that all hindrances to the coming of His Kingdom may be removed. We ourselves lose ourselves in the deep compass of those three notes from the seven-stringed harp which makes its beautiful music in the ears of GOD. We are taken out of ourselves into the society of saints and angels. We are borne along with the interests of JESUS throughout the world. Again, when our LORD bids us pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us, it cannot but presuppose all the rest of intercessory prayer. He singles out those whom we shall be most inclined to except, and, when removing the exception, confirms the universality of the duty of intercession.

3. This example of our LORD JESUS CHRIST has been followed by the Church in every age. The call of the Divine Shepherd has been echoed on through all the manifold varieties of the different branches of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church. "Being reviled," they say, "we bless. Being defamed, we entreat. I exhort"—such are the words of one of the chief teachers of the early Church—"that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority." When S. Peter was thrown into prison, as a matter of course the Church met together in the little room at Jerusalem, and prayer was made earnestly unto GOD for him, and the prayers were answered, and the angel was sent forth, and Peter was lifted up, and his chains fell off from his hands, and the iron gate opened to them of its own

accord, and the messenger of God directed his path into the road which led to the house where many were making intercession for him. However hard they worked, the work of intercession was always put in the forefront of their activity. The summons of the ancient seer was uttered with the increasing confidence of those who knew that their prayers were linked with the intercessions of the SON of GOD, perfect GOD and perfect Man. The watchword was passed on from soldier to soldier. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that are the LORD's remembrancers, take ye no rest, and give Him no rest till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." And, without further quotations from Holy Scripture, let us dwell a little in detail on the habits of the Apostle of the Gentiles, who has been allowed by God to open out to us the inner springs of his life.

Let us look for a while at the practice of the Apostle Paul. His habits of prayer for others are revealed almost unconsciously. To the Romans he writes: "GOD is my witness that, without ceasing, I make mention of you always in my prayers." To the Corinthians: "I thank my GOD always on your behalf for the grace of GOD which is given you by JESUS CHRIST." To the Galatians: "My little children, I travail in birth again till CHRIST be formed in you." To the Ephesians: "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. I bow my knees to the FATHER, that He would grant you to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." To the Philippians: "I thank my GOD upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for GOD is my record how greatly I long after you all in the tender mercies of JESUS CHRIST." To the Colossians: "We give thanks to GOD, praying always for

you. Since the day we heard it we do not cease to pray for you. I would that you knew what great conflict I have for you, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." To the Thessalonians: "We give thanks to God always for you, making mention of you in our prayers, with joy for your sakes before God, night and day praying exceedingly that we might perfect that which is lacking in your faith." To S. Timothy: "I thank God that, without ceasing, I have remembrance of thee night and day." To Philemon: "I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers."

These passages, taken together, give us the picture of a man whose words, "Pray without ceasing," were simply the expression of his daily life. He had a deep sense that no human soul could be really converted save by the HOLY GHOST; that the conviction of sin, the belief in a Saviour, the entire surrender to the risen LORD, could only be accomplished by the same Blessed Spirit. He knew also that this realizing of their Baptism, this simple conversion, was only the beginning of the life of sanctification. He had learnt the need of the grace and power of heaven being brought down for the young converts by the prayers of more advanced believers; "the need of large and unceasing prayer in order to bring it down: the certainty that prayer would bring it down." These foundation principles of the spiritual life were so intertwined in his inmost being that his whole existence was continual and most definite prayer. He had such a sense that everything must come from above, and such a faith that it would come in answer to prayer, that intercession was neither a duty nor a burden, but the natural turning of the heart to the only place whence it could obtain what it sought for others.

Further, in all the varied needs of his tried and tempted life, he threw himself with almost passionate

entreaties upon the prayers of those to whom he had ministered the Word of God. "I beseech you, brethren, for the LORD JESUS CHRIST's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you agonize together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them who do not believe in Judæa, and may come unto you with joy by the Will of God." And again, "Pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit for all saints, and for me, that I may open my mouth boldly, that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak." And again, "I know that this trouble will turn to my salvation through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit through JESUS CHRIST." And again, "Pray for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of CHRIST, that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak."

4. To this life-long work of intercession, then, we are pledged by our Baptism. For men and women and children who will intercede, God is waiting. Now, as in olden days, when He sees that no man responds, He wonders that there is no intercessor. He looks, and there is none to help Him. He wonders, and there is none to uphold. "I sought," He says, "for a man that should stand in the gate before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found none. I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and how is the fruit to be borne? That whatsoever ye shall ask of the FATHER in My Name, He may give it you."

Modern science is teaching us many lessons of surpassing value, but few are more valuable than that of the existence of law in the natural world. In like manner, the spiritual world is governed by divine laws which have been established on sure foundations by Him Who is the LORD alike of the kingdom of Nature and of Grace.

One of these laws is this. If the supernatural power of the eternal world, if the strength and the might of the Infinite and Incomprehensible God is to be brought down into the limited area of this lower world, then, as a general rule, intercession must first be offered ; two or three must be found to pray to the LORD GOD of Sabaoth before the heavens can be opened and the shower of blessing descend upon the Church that is struggling against its threefold enemy, upon a world that is lying in wickedness, upon a whole creation groaning and travelling together in pain.

Into this school of intercession each one of us, unless we will abnegate our Baptism, and trample under foot the Gospel of Redemption, must be prepared to enter. But just as the boy must have private teaching before he is able to take his part in the life of our public schools, so each individual Christian, old and young, rich and poor, must undergo a preparatory training before he can take his part with saints and martyrs and confessors in this, which is one of the highest possibilities of our regenerate being.

Briefly, let me note this preparation of heart : promising first that it can only be accomplished by the HOLY SPIRIT, and, secondly, reminding you that we must definitely and energetically co-operate with the HOLY SPIRIT unless we would be disobedient to the heavenly vision, and be judged at the last as a barren branch that has brought no fruit, and has been condemned to go on burning in that fire which is prepared for the unprofitable servant. How, then, is this preparation to be accomplished ? We must learn to come to God in the Name of JESUS CHRIST, and this means far more than the ending of a collect with the Name which is above every name. We must be in harmony with the mind of CHRIST in these particulars.

We must be in harmony with CHRIST as the great Confessor of sin. We must recognize what a horrible thing sin is—not merely what the world calls sin, but those breaches of the divine love of God to man, which by the mass of mankind are almost, if not entirely, ignored : the pride, which is so admired on earth, the self-seeking, the love of money, the worldliness, the craving for human rewards, the unrestrained temper, the indifference to the needs of others—the list is endless. We have to look these sins, which we, in thought and word and deed have committed, steadily in the face. And, I repeat it, we have to learn what a horrible thing the least of these sins is in the sight of God and of the holy angels. We have to regard it as a sin against God's most righteous Will, withdrawing from Him His lawful position over our souls, and transferring them to His and our enemy, the devil, who disputes His sovereignty over us. We have to regard every omission of duty, or commission of evil, as an offence against Infinite Goodness, bringing a dark blot into God's creation, marring its beauty as God made it, to be a mirror of some of His own perfections. We have to look at these sins in their consequences to ourselves and to others—as the loss of God, the loss of the eternal fruition of God, the loss of the end of our being for which God created us.

It is impossible to really intercede unless we know something of the guilt of sin, unless from our hearts we are saying, day by day, in spirit if not in word, "Almighty God, the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Maker of all things, Judge of all men, I acknowledge that I have sinned by my fault, my own fault, my own most grievous fault."

We have to be in harmony with the mind of CHRIST by receiving day by day, definitely applied to our souls by the HOLY GHOST, the wonderful redemption which

has been accomplished by the sacrifice of our Redeemer. We have to believe on GOD's Word, that the FATHER has so loved us that He has made, at the cost of infinite suffering, a full, perfect, and complete sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for all our sins by the Death and Passion of His well-beloved SON. We can never be free from our miserable dwelling upon ourselves, never able to throw out all the energy of our life into prayer for others till we have known that our own sins are, through GOD's eternal Will, blotted out, till we have so believed in JESUS CHRIST that, sprinkled by His precious Blood, we are at peace with GOD, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. If we are to intercede as a regular daily habit, we must have learned to be continually looking out of ourselves up to GOD : Whose love, unmerited, large, liberal, abundant, is for ever there, first to give us the foundation of peace, by the assurance of our entire Absolution, altogether irrespective of the sins which we have committed ; and then again and again to restore to us, on each of our repentances, with that same large and liberal love, again and again that same sense of peace. We have got to believe that—not to be for ever worrying ourselves, not to be for ever miserably anxious : rather again and again simply coming back to confess our sins, with an absolute unsparing reality, but in proportion to the unsparing reality, and utter humility and utter self-abasement with which we confess ourselves, to believe indeed that GOD is, to His Word in CHRIST, "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

We have to take that will of ours, which has been through sin alienated from GOD's most righteous Will, and to submit it absolutely and entirely to the Will of GOD. As our LORD JESUS CHRIST took His human nature, and at the cost of agony unspeakable forced it

into obedience to the divine ideal in His entire life of action and endurance, so every day we have in spirit, if not in word, to say, "O God, I offer and present unto Thee myself, to be and to do and to endure what Thou dost will. Thy Will, O my FATHER, not my will, be done." This is very hard, but it is very important as a preparation for intercession.

It is also pathetic to hear Christians who have long been communicants tell how that their faith is utterly upset, because God has not answered the prayers which they have offered for their husbands or wives or children, or for some poor sinner wandering away into the far land. This is a natural rebellion against the Will of God ; but it is not the less rebellion, and the end of rebellion is the fire that burns with a burning which finite man cannot understand, much less define. Therefore, before we enter into the school of intercession, we must have formed the habit of, at least with our will, yielding body, soul, and spirit to the Will of our FATHER in heaven. We must be in harmony with the mind of CHRIST by asking nothing without the reserve that it be granted, so far as it is according to the Will of God.

We must train ourselves in a spirit of thanksgiving. Just as every day we put down the sins which we have to confess, so every day we must put down the things for which we have to thank God. This is a condition not only of a happy life, but of perseverance in intercession. I had almost said that it is one of the conditions on the fulfilment of which the answer to our intercessions is made to depend. We cannot be in sympathy with the mind of CHRIST unless we are cultivating a Eucharistic spirit.

We have to train ourselves in the common everyday life to habits of perseverance. We must learn to finish as well as to begin any work, however trifling, which has

been entrusted to us. We must go on till, like CHRIST, we, in our measure and degree, can say, "It is finished." For, when we enter into the great school of intercession, we shall learn by a very startling experience the necessity of waiting upon GOD. We must bring the habit which we have learned in the trifling round and the common task into the courts of the sanctuary, and be prepared to leave to GOD the time and the place in which our intercessions shall find their response. He will surely answer them, but in His own way, and at His own time, either in this life, or in the life of the world to come.

We must be prepared for difficulties. Our LORD never hid these difficulties from His disciples, and they are implied in the Scriptural expressions by which intercession is described—wresting, travailing in birth, agonizing, and the like. All these words imply pain, and this is natural—for in intercession we go down to fight against principalities and powers. We strive to snatch a human soul out of the fire which Satan has prepared for it, and we cannot expect that no smell of the flame will have passed upon us.

Our warfare in intercession is against a living being who hates GOD, and hates man—who will use against us all his marvellous talent, his ever-increasing experience, gained in more than six thousand years from the history of souls which he has destroyed. He will tell us that we are too busy, as if any earthly work could be more important than bringing down the power of heaven into a suffering Church and a fallen world. He will whisper to us, coming with false humility as an angel of light, that we are not worthy, as if GOD had ever asked us to intercede in our own name and not in the Name of the sinless SON of GOD.

Above all, if we would be in sympathy with the mind of CHRIST, we must honour the HOLY GHOST, and claim

His divine assistance. "Greater works than these shall ye do [greater works of prayer as well as of outward activity], because I go to the FATHER."

If we would triumph in our conflict of intercession, we must train ourselves to depend upon the HOLY GHOST. He alone can deliver each of us from our individual temptations, be it to over-occupation or sloth, or a mechanical way of saying our prayers, or omission of meditation on eternal things, or the lack of cherishing our own love for CHRIST, and our love for the souls which He has redeemed, or a dull despondency, or a practical scepticism. We need to cast ourselves upon Him before we pray—to cast ourselves upon Him again and again when the thoughts begin to wander, and the faith to dwindle—to fall back upon His divine aid when our time for intercession is ended.

We must leave the miserable failures of our best efforts to that love of the HOLY SPIRIT, Who will pour into our imperfect supplications the perfect intercession with which they are linked—the intercession of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, our only Mediator and Advocate.

5. Having thus prepared ourselves, let us think for a moment of the opportunities which, in God's mercy, have been provided for exercising this faculty of intercession.

Foremost, according to the witness of the whole Catholic Church, is the Sacrament of CHRIST's Body and Blood, the Eucharistic Sacrifice. And here we must be on our guard against burdening our Holy Communion with a number of detailed requests and thanksgivings. Rather, we shall gather up the petitions of our private devotions and our public prayer meetings, and in one great act of intercession, lay them all at the feet of the Eternal FATHER in the Name of JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

And in regard to this matter of intercession, let me bear witness to the marvellous privilege of being allowed to use that which is technically called the Scottish Office. It does indeed balance the manifold difficulties and limitations of our northern life to be permitted in the ordinary course of our ministry thus to draw near to our heavenly FATHER: according to the institution of His dearly beloved SON, our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, and there to celebrate and make before His Divine Majesty the memorial His SON has commanded us to make, having in remembrance His blessed Passion and precious Death, His mighty Resurrection and glorious Ascension, rendering unto Him most hearty thanks for the innumerable benefits procured unto us by the same.

What a new power comes down into our supplication when we thus stand before the throne and commit to the eternal love, in the very Presence of our ascended LORD, all bishops, priests, and deacons, all people who are called by the Name of CHRIST, every member of the congregation there assembled, all who, in this transitory life, are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or in other adversity: till at last we seem to realize that we are already in heavenly places, as we bless God's holy Name for all His servants who have finished their course in faith, and yield unto Him most high praise and hearty thanks for the wonderful grace and virtue declared in all His saints who have been the choice vessels of His grace, and the lights of the world in their several generations; praying that we and all them who are of the mystical Body of His SON may be set on His right hand, and hear His most joyful voice, "Come, ye blessed of My FATHER, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Next, we have the daily offices, the ordinary morning and evening services, which all priests and deacons are

commanded to say daily, either privately or openly, not being let by sickness or some other urgent cause. What a wealth of intercession is contained in those prayers which have been for ages the means by which the saints of God have made known the wants of the world to their FATHER in heaven.

And here let me note how important it is, if we are to be true intercessors, that, while we avoid all drawling, we specially guard in a hurrying age against the habit of gabbling the prayers, of trying to get the office said in the shortest possible time. There are, of course, many occasions on which we are justified in taking advantage of the permission which the Church has now given us to shorten the office ; but this permission should be sparingly used by those who have been properly trained in the school of intercession.

Surely, for instance, we ought to consider very carefully before we omit the prayers for the King, or the Royal Family, or the Parliament, or for all sorts and conditions of men. Still more, we ought to avoid relegating to an hour at which few, if any, can attend the comprehensive petitions of our solemn Litany. Surely, if in everything our prayers are to be mingled with thanksgiving, we ought to have a jealous eye lest without special cause the General Thanksgiving be omitted with all its acknowledgement of God's goodness, alike in our creation, preservation, and redemption !

Again, those who have made use of the practice of small meetings for intercession, where two or three assemble together to lay before God the little details of the individual, the family, the congregation, the parish, the world, are not likely quickly to abandon the practice.

It must be sad, indeed, to the angels in heaven to see those men and women deprived of this help, to watch the well-meaning, kind-hearted pastor wandering about

in busy idleness, or to see the overworked priest in a town charge hurrying on with strained face and anxious eyes, as if the peace of God that passeth all understanding had never been put within his reach ; as if he had never received the permission to gather his people together, and, with the simplicity of a little child, to cast their every anxiety upon God, knowing that his heavenly FATHER careth for them.

It must be sad for these blessed spirits who live in God's more immediate Presence, and know the possibilities of His Church on earth, to see the hundreds of sick people who have been long left without any education in intercession, so that almost all the power of their prayers is lost to the Church of God.

On the other hand, it is a joyful and a pleasant thing where the pastor trains his two or three to pray together—to pray for the children, that they may be educated in the love of God ; to pray for the missions of the Church at home and abroad ; for the sick, the suffering, the dying ; for the great harvest-field in Asia and Africa, and America, that the good seed may be watered in every corner of the universe, and spring up into everlasting life.

And here, may I mention, as a significant sign of the deepening life of the Church, that there is a large society of men and women upon whom the hand of sickness has been laid with more or less severity, who, in olden days, would have been satisfied with trying to be patient and endure, but who have now been taught that they are part of the chosen generation and the royal priesthood ; that they are set upon the walls of Jerusalem to be the LORD's remembrancers, to intercede for the needs of a fallen humanity, to hold up the hands of those who are sent into the very middle of the conflict, to battle for the Crucified against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

God bless and multiply a hundredfold that Society of Watchers and Workers !

All this will, I doubt not, sound commonplace to many of my hearers ; but the work of a teacher is to translate commonplaces into realities, and I, for one, at any rate, shall not feel that I have laboured in vain this day if I have stirred in my own heart, and in the hearts of those to whom I speak, a desire to value more the Blessed Sacrament, and the daily office, and the quiet meetings for united prayer, and the priesthood of suffering.

But there is another opportunity for intercession which must not be overlooked. We learn, alike from the lives of the saints, and from the experience of Christians in our own day, that there are periods in the spiritual history of many of God's children in which all vitality appears to be destroyed : all consciousness of the truth of divine revelation extinguished, all power to pray taken away from those whose chiefest joy it once was to go up with the multitude into the house of God, or to lay bare their hearts before their FATHER in the privacy of their own chamber. They lie, like S. John in the Apocalypse, as it were, dead—no living heart, no beating pulse, no active brain, no open eye with which to look into the mysteries of the unseen world. It is a time of terrible experience, resulting sometimes from physical weakness, over-strain of nerve force, and the like, sent sometimes as a special discipline from God. It is indeed darkness—a darkness in which all the beasts of the forest do move, and in which the roaring lion draws very near, seeking to rob CHRIST of the soul which He has redeemed. But if only in this dark hour the Christian has strength, amid all the feeling of being forsaken, just to offer up to God a single intercession, to mention the name of some one sick person, some great sinner, some

mission in special need, some evangelist struggling in far-off lands ; if only he can say, O GOD, take my pain of body, or soul, or spirit, and link it with the sufferings of Thy SON, and give it back in blessing to him for whom I pray, then the mightiest triumphs of intercession are achieved, in answer to the unconscious faith of that forsaken spirit, holding on to GOD amid all the attacks of the spirit of evil, all the unutterable deadness of its inner being.

It is these prayers of infirmity which the HOLY SPIRIT in a peculiar manner delights to help. When we know not how to pray, or what to pray for ; when we can frame no words in which to clothe our own needs, let alone the needs of others, then we are allowed to fall back on the indwelling Presence of GOD the HOLY GHOST, Who Himself makes intercession in us beneath the groanings which cannot be uttered : then we learn something of what our LORD meant when He said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." We realize something of what S. Paul experienced, when he said to the Ephesians, "I ask that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which are your glory." And to the Colossians, "I fill up on my part that which is behind of the afflictions of CHRIST in my flesh for His Body's sake, which is the Church." And to the Corinthians, "Most gladly will I glory in my weakness, that the strength of CHRIST may spread its tabernacle over me. When I am weak, then am I strong."

But time would fail me to tell of the manifold guilds for prayer, all the opportunities which have been placed within our reach by the condescension of the Eternal GOD. When a Christian friend comes to us on a matter of secular business, the condition of Holy Scripture can be fulfilled. Two are *there* with one accord in one place ;

two are together *in the Name of Jesus Christ*. There He, the LORD, our Redeemer, is present in the midst of them. There, they can agree as touching anything about which they will intercede, and, if it be right, it shall be done for them—so saith the CHRIST—"by My FATHER which is in heaven."

As we are journeying from place to place, and the trains are late, instead of grumbling at the mismanagement of the railway, is it not possible, sometimes, to take our book of intercession, and, in the thought of the great world for which we plead, to forget the passing inconvenience or unwelcome delay?

GOD knows the abundance of our opportunities in this respect. GOD knows how little we have made use of them. A lost opportunity! Something for eternity dropped out of our lives! Oh, what easy words to say. Oh, what a terrible reality when weighed in the balances of heaven! "Lost, dropped down, sunk in the boiling tumultuous ocean, over which we are passing to eternity—not a trace of it left—gone for ever." GOD be merciful with us, not dealing with us after our sins, nor rewarding us according to our iniquities. GOD cleanse our souls from the guilt of this omitted duty of intercession for the honour of our crucified and risen LORD!

IV

COME YE YOURSELVES APART

“And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and they told Him all things, whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught. And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while. For there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat.”—S. MARK vi. 30, 31, R.V.

SUCH is one of the vivid pictures in which S. Mark delights.

CHRIST had sent out His representatives with authority to deliver men out of the thralldom of Satan, to force back the powers of evil by which the world had hitherto been infested, to proclaim the glad tidings of His Kingdom. And now, with head erect and flashing eyes, they bring back the report of the triumphs which, in His Name, had been accomplished: the demons that had been cast out; the sick who had been healed.

And then our great High Priest, Who has compassion upon His brethren, looked up at the tired look and the signs of over-strain which were written on their faces, and postponed for a while all His natural joy in listening to the records of His victories, and bade them come apart and rest in some desert place where the body might be strengthened, the soul refreshed, and the exhausted life renewed by fellowship with Himself.

No interpretation of this passage must be allowed

which overlooks its more obvious meaning. It is one of those marks of tender human sympathy which shine out in our LORD's entire ministry.

But the Church, under the enlightenment of the HOLY SPIRIT, has seen in these words of our Divine Master another teaching which belongs to every age, and is adapted to all the changing circumstances of our pilgrim life.

Suffer me briefly to explain my meaning, and to apply it to the circumstances under which we are this morning assembled ; and may GOD the HOLY GHOST, without Whom all human words are like the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal, so guide the words spoken and so open your hearts to receive His message that it may issue in His glory, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD !

"The Apostles gathered themselves together unto JESUS, and they told Him all things, whatsoever they had done, and whatsoever they had taught."

Is not this, in its essence, a description of the object with which we are now gathered together ? Are we not here to tell to our LORD whatsoever we have done and whatsoever we have taught ? Are we not here, first, to lay at His feet the record of the past ?

It is a strange mingling of good and evil, of success and failure, the record of what we have done and taught in the years that lie immediately behind us.

On the one hand, there is much for which to be thankful. We have heard, thank God, the voice of the King of kings penetrating into the sepulchre in which the Church of our fathers was entombed. We have marked the quickening pulse, the gradual uprising, the grave-clothes slowly loosed—the tokens of her resurrection life, acknowledged alike by friend and foe.

If I may adopt the thoughts of one of our most

disciplined thinkers, it is hardly too much to say that, in the nineteenth century, the whole aspect of the Anglican branch of the Catholic Church has been transformed :—

“ God forbid that we should forget how much serious and active goodness there was in the earlier part of the century ; how much earnest and persevering devotion ; how much purity and faith and manly force and unostentatious self-control. But so far as concerned its outward and public aspect, as it looked to spectators in a stirring and almost revolutionary time, how pitiful was the apathy, the respectable routine, the timid caution, the incapacity for originality, the dread of enthusiasm and enterprise by which that institution was marked which represented the Divine Society, which had dared to undertake the conquest of the world ! Who dreamed of attempting to rally the masses or the middle classes to an intelligent loyalty to the Church ? Who recognized adequately the tremendous obligation of providing for those masses any real education ? Who thought that, by the end of the century, a vast and energetic Episcopate, a new ecclesiastical world, in America and the colonies, would have been called into existence ? ” That our ancient Universities would become the fountains from which the streams of living waters should be diffused to the utmost parts of the earth ; that on India’s coral strand and Africa’s sunny shore they would plant strong and enduring missions, not grudging the life-blood of their noblest sons to witness for the Redeemer ? “ Who thought of men and women, gently nurtured, with the choice of an easy life before them, choosing in numbers, with cheerful hearts, to give up everything in order to nurse the sick, to live with the poor ; aye, and as the poor, to be daily companions of the sinners and the miserable ? Who thought then of crowded churches, except to hear the eloquence of some favourite preacher ? ”

For these, and numberless other blessings ; for our missions, and retreats, and quiet days ; for our honest efforts to worship God in the beauty of holiness ; for our recognition of the long-forgotten fact that we cannot be loving our neighbour as ourselves if we pay no attention to the manner in which he is housed, the environment by which he is surrounded, the provision that is made for his natural need of recreation, and the like : for all these things we have indeed cause to be thankful, and to come with humble, reverent joy to tell our LORD of the things which He has enabled us to teach and to do.

But there is another side to the picture. How poor, when compared with our possibilities, has been the fruit which has been gathered by this branch of the one Catholic and Apostolic Church ! How partial is the witness which has been borne to the fullness of the Catholic Faith, the Fatherhood of God, the Incarnation of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, the personality of the HOLY GHOST, the one Catholic Church and Communion of Saints ! How little there has been of strong Scriptural teaching as to the guilt of sin, the certainty of the coming judgement, the free forgiveness through the Precious Blood, the reality of the conflict with Satan, the world, and the flesh, the need of an entire change of heart and life incumbent on every member of a fallen humanity ! How few are so brought out into the joy and peace of believing that they abound in hope by the power of the HOLY GHOST ! How seldom is there combined with this so-called evangelical teaching the glorious privileges of the baptized ; the unspeakable gift of the laying-on of hands ; the spiritual sacrifice of the Eucharist ; the strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the Body and Blood of CHRIST ; the reality of the gift bestowed

upon the penitent soul in every Absolution, whether public or private! How few, even of our most enlightened believers, are so constrained by CHRIST's love as to live not to themselves, but to Him Who loved them and gave Himself for them: so laid hold of by that all-mastering power of the Agony and bloody sweat, the Cross and the Passion, as to take their religion into the details of their daily life, and to allow CHRIST really to dominate in the shop, the office, the home, and the ordinary gatherings of society! How little have we learned practically of the meaning of the second great commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself": love him with that divinely inspired charity which suffers long and is kind, which envieth not, rejoices not in the iniquity of its opponents, but rejoices in the truth, even when taught by those from whom it differs—the charity which seeketh not its own, but by steadfast purpose obliges itself to enter into the position of those from whom it disagrees; to learn by hard thought and fervent prayer to realize their standpoint, and to make allowance for what may seem, at first sight, to be their defects or excesses! How little has there been, in spite of some noble exceptions, of that ancient love which, in the fervour of an Apostolic age, refused to count anything as its own so long as any need of the Church had not been supplied! How few set apart even a tenth of their money for CHRIST and His Church! How pitiful has been our dependence upon human methods to the ignoring of the supernatural methods of the indwelling Spirit, the Giver of wisdom and understanding, and counsel, and strength! What a surprise it would be to the Church at large if a number of persons belonging to different schools of thought, separated one from another by the very earnest-

ness of their convictions, were to go quietly away from the bustle of the outer life, and, with daily celebrations of the Holy Communion, and frequent intercessions and study of the Bible, were to wait upon the HOLY GHOST till they had received from Him some guidance as to the way in which they might bridge over the gulf by which they were separated! How few sick bodies and diseased souls have been saved by the prayer of faith! How few of the demons of impurity and intemperance, and the like, have been cast out by the all-conquering force of GOD the HOLY GHOST! How we have wasted our strength and swelled the ranks of infidelity by our miserable divisions! How, by our want of unity, have we weakened our hold on the education of the country, and have blocked the way against the manifold reforms, which, in every living Church, are required by each succeeding generation!

For these, and all our other sins which we cannot now remember, let us humbly ask pardon of Almighty GOD.

"Thou, O LORD, art good. We thank Thee for all Thy mercies. Thy Word has not failed. We are not straitened in Thee; we are straitened in ourselves. We beseech Thee to hear us, good LORD, that it may please Thee to give us true repentance, to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances, and to endue us with the grace of Thy HOLY SPIRIT to amend our lives according to Thy holy Word."

Yes, we are here, secondly, to seek guidance from our LORD how best in the future we can amend our teaching and our doings according to His holy Word. This is what is really meant by subjects which we think of as—"Old Testament Criticism," "Education," "Autonomy of the Church," "Foreign Work," "Housing of the People," etc.

In all these discussions we are, as it were, kneeling before the Fountain of all wisdom, asking Him that, as, in olden times, He guided His faithful people by the light of His HOLY SPIRIT, so He will now vouchsafe to His Church a right judgement for the glory of His holy Name. GOD grant it, for JESUS CHRIST's sake.

We content ourselves this morning with the consideration of only one answer to these prayers which He will assuredly give to us—one principle which stands at the threshold of all living theology and successful activity. It is the principle which is enunciated by our Divine Master in the words of my text, "Come ye yourselves apart, and rest a while."

In other words, before we consider how to help others, either in word or deed, we need to apprehend with our mind, and to embody in our practice, the principle of withdrawing at certain times from the world, with its manifold distractions, so that it may be part of the regular system of our life to be day by day alone with GOD—to commune with our LORD, and be still.

This is a hard saying. It seems at first to traverse the popular ideas of our modern life, for, alike in the Church and in the world, a spirit of unrest has taken possession of all ranks and classes.

1. It infects those whose hearts are surrendered to our LORD, and sends them hurrying from church to church; from service to service: from one form of philanthropy to another.

2. It takes possession of the mere pleasure-seekers, so that their very amusements become a toil, as the sunken eyes and the wearied face reveal the utter exhaustion of a London season.

3. And what shall I say of those who, from choice or from necessity, are toiling amid the teeming populations

of our large cities? Work, work, work is the cry which day by day arises from the vast labour-fields of England. On and on the huge machine is ever moving; one after another of the hands by which it is plied falls down exhausted; for a moment there is a pause, until the vacant place is filled; then onward again it moves, commencing afresh with redoubled vigour its never-ceasing whirl.

Surely, in such an age as this, and in such a neighbourhood as this, it must sound like mere trifling to preach from such a text as this, "Come ye yourselves apart, and rest a while!" And yet, if you will be patient and bear with me, you will acknowledge, I think, that it is not in vain that the preacher strives to-day to echo on this appeal of his LORD and Master.

Are there no dangers, think you, in this ceaseless activity by which we are encompassed?

GOD forbid that we should ignore its blessings. With no grudging heart do we thank Him that we are developing to a marvellous extent the resources which He has entrusted to our stewardship; that in every walk of life indolence is despised; that the demand for qualified persons in the various departments of industry is gradually driving the drones out of every corner of our social hive; that we are, by this ceaseless energy, striving to submit our creaturely will to the great law of its Creator, to accept the charter by which the possession of this world was entrusted to a fallen humanity: "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread."

But I repeat the question, Are there no dangers, think you, in this ceaseless activity by which we are encompassed?

1. The physician will tell you that he can trace them in the nervous debility, the feverish excitement, the anxious face, the craving for stimulant, the premature decay of vital force.

2. The man of intelligence will acknowledge their presence as he sighs in vain for days when men had time to be silent, and had leisure to think, as he utters the pathetic appeal which is voiced by one of our modern poets :—

“Old things need not be therefore true,
O brother men, nor yet the new :
Ah, still awhile the old retain,
And yet consider it again !

Alas ! the old world goes its way,
And takes its truth from each new day ;
They do not quit, nor can retain,
Far less consider it again.”

3. The man who has imbibed our LORD's love for his fatherland, the true patriot shudders as he marks the success in a hurrying age of the empty chatter of self-constituted teachers—

“Of the men who pamper a hasty time,
Who feed with crude imaginings
The herd ; wild hearts and feeble wings
That every sophister can lime.”

“If only,” he cries, “if only the thousands on whom the destinies of this great empire depend, would sometimes withdraw from the outer world to read and think, and, if they believe in God, to pray ; if only the voice of the Perfect Man could echo into their hearts, ‘Come ye yourselves apart, and rest a while’ !”

4. Still more does the Christian philosopher mourn over this lack of restful withdrawal into the realized Presence of GOD :—“He knows that true mental and spiritual development consists in intensifying the inward life, in passing from that which is without to that which is within, and from that which is within to that which is above. He knows that the only hope for real progress is in the habit of self-recollection, which gathers the man together, and makes him abide steadfast at his heart's

core. He sees instead that mighty central life, which is the abode of the undying spirit, left as a forgotten, unheeded and neglected sanctuary—a lost fountain-head." He sees the effect on real believers of this unrest, as he watches them snatching at any hasty generalization, any new panacea, any exploded heresy which seems to promise a short and easy road into spiritual knowledge and the victory over evil. He marks it in the exaggerated demand for short sermons and short services, in the comparatively few who attend a retreat or a quiet day, or any of the means by which the faithful pastor tries to train his people into habits of withdrawal from the outer life—to lift them from the noise of the market-place up to the mount of the Vision of God. He notes it in the impatience of all teaching which involves careful self-examination and earnest study of God's Word, and systematic meditation on the things which pertain to the Kingdom of God.

Yes, in the midst of all our thanksgivings for the progress of the nineteenth century we recognize that body and mind and heart and spirit are being destroyed by the demands of the busy age in which our lot is cast.

But some one will say, "Those last words which you have uttered furnish our excuse. You admit that our lot has been cast by a never-failing Providence in this busy age. Numbers are coming and going, so that we have not leisure to feed our own souls even with heavenly food. It was easy in the calm of Galilean life ; it is impossible for us in the utterly different circumstance of our modern society."

Here, my brethren, we are face to face with the master spirit of evil.

And here I do not forget that many, even of professing Christians, have satisfied themselves that, however great may be the forces or influences of evil, there

is no living being from whom they proceed and by whom they are guided.

Satan's most clever device in these latter days is so to lie hidden behind the trees of the forest as to persuade men that he does not actually exist. But all the while he is there, waiting, like the lion, for the opportunity to burst forth from his lair and destroy the souls who, through lack of thought and quiet prayer and godly watchfulness, have ventured to enter into his kingdom.

(a) And here, in this objection—I repeat it—we are face to face with one of his master deceits.

Has not every one who has tried the habit of withdrawing to be alone with God day by day found in that quiet hour, before the letters are opened and the powers of this world have entered into his soul, the secret of all calm, powerful work, whether in things spiritual or things secular? Has he not discovered that when in his folly he abandons it, except on those rare occasions when God Himself seems to demand it at his hands and bids him go for a while in the strength of the food which he has previously received—has he not discovered that the result of the self-willed abandonment of the still hour has this, and only this, result? In the words of S. Augustine: "The inner depths of his soul are thrown into his outer life; his life hurries on, spreads itself far and wide, but the source of his life dries up." There is abundance of work in *quantity*, but the *quality* is poor.

Have you never heard of one of England's great engineers, who, whenever any specially difficult work was to be accomplished, was accustomed to retire into the solitude of his chamber? There, with closed doors, he concentrated the entire powers of his mind upon the object with which he was concerned until at last he was enabled to go forth in the strength of an assured

knowledge to pierce the eternal mountain or to bridge with his viaduct the well-nigh impracticable torrents.

Have you never read of the general who, on the evening before a great battle, would sit alone for hours, his entire being absorbed in the chart of the ground on which, before the setting of the morrow's sun, the destinies of empires were to be decided? There, in that quiet hour, he examined every feature of the country, weighed every difficulty, forecasted every position, anticipated every possible reverse, until the time for action had arrived. And then he went out from his tent thoroughly furnished for every emergency, calm and collected amidst the pealing trumpets, the clashing swords, and the far-sounding cannons' roar, with the quiet confidence of the man who had counselled well with his own mind and been still.

Was it not when Jacob was alone that the angel of GOD drew near, and transformed him from the subtle, scheming man, dependent on natural forces, into Israel, the Prince of GOD?

Was it not when Daniel was left alone that the future of the world was revealed and a divine statesmanship imparted to him?

Have we, or have we not, been baptized into CHRIST? Has not the mark of the Cross been signed on our forehead? Are we not pledged to follow CHRIST, and to make His human life the pattern of our every thought and word, and deed? And was it not the habit of our LORD continually to go apart to receive fresh supplies into His sacred humanity of the spiritual force which was required for the work that His FATHER had put into His hands?

Are not the overshadowing rocks and the olive-garden of Gethsemane and the shores of the Galilean lake eloquent of the quiet hours of JESUS of Nazareth?

Was it not as the result of the forty days of solitude on the Mount of Temptation that He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, so teaching, and so preaching, and so healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people that even a thoughtless world was impressed by the sense of His divine power as His fame went throughout all the region round about, and He was glorified of all? Was it not—to return to the incident from which the text is taken—was it not by this withdrawal into the desert that He refreshed His own Spirit and revived the life of His disciples, so that He was able to come back to the outer world and use them as His instruments in feeding the hungry thousands?

Is not Satan the father of lies when he tells us that we shall do the duties of our busy life more quickly and more easily in the wearying rush of our natural efforts instead of quietly drawing in life from the Infinite God, and then going out to finish the duties which our FATHER has given us to do?

(b) It would be easy to show, secondly, how, in this matter, Satan is not merely a liar, but a robber.

Satan knows that we belong to a chosen generation which God has created to manifest His glory. He knows the mysterious power of that holy Sacrament of Baptism by which we are made partakers not only of the Death but of the Resurrection and Ascension life of the Incarnate God. He knows that the angels in heaven are blessing God because He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in CHRIST JESUS, even as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world—that we are being fed in a heavenly and spiritual manner with the Body and Blood of CHRIST; are being trained one by one by GOD the HOLY GHOST in order that by our instrumentality the crooked may be

made straight and the rough places plain ; that we may loose the bands of wickedness and let the oppressed go free, and carry the Gospel of the Redeemer to the utmost parts of the earth.

To hinder us from thus destroying his own dark kingdom, Satan sets himself with subtle craft to deprive us of our high privileges. He is well aware that, unless we believe in the possibilities of our regenerate life, we shall never realize them in our practical activities ; unless we have read our title-deeds, we shall never discharge the obligations of our royal birthright. So he tries to hurry us from place to place, from work to work, and from church to church : to occupy all our vital force with things that are passing away, and to leave us no leisure to listen to the Saviour's tender appeal, "Come ye yourselves apart, and rest a while."

(c) If what has been said is not enough to rouse our chivalry, to kindle our loyal response to the call of the great Captain of our salvation, let me end with one short and practical appeal to our natural love of self.

Satan is a destroyer—this is a commonplace ; wise, with an experience acquired in ages of unceasing warfare ; strong in the memory of thousands of successful contests, he goes about seeking whom he may devour. And the Bible is our guide as to the methods by which he seeks to accomplish this deadly end. One of the most successful methods has been indicated to us by GOD the HOLY GHOST in the pages of the written Word. We are told that from the beginning it has been the aim of the spirit of evil to lull our souls into a false security ; to harden us by the deceitfulness of sin ; to cry, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace.

He endeavours to blind our eyes that we may not see the abyss into which he is leading us. He closes

our ears lest one word of divine warning may penetrate into our hearts. He persuades us that the threatenings of the Bible belong to others, while its promises are our peculiar inheritance. He whispers to us that somehow it will be all well at last, and that the passages about the eternal judgement may be otherwise explained. He soothes every alarm of an awakened conscience. He chokes our spiritual life by the cares of this world, or dissipates it by its pleasures or its vanities. He trains us into a sort of hap-hazard, easy-going religion, based upon a few texts, separated from the context of the general teaching of God's Word.

By these and similar devices he seeks to rock our souls into an unbroken slumber, until he has carried us in this dull, fatal sleep out of time into eternity ; out of the Kingdom of life, and light, and salvation, into the blackness of the eternal gloom.

"Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." Surely, my brethren, you will not, from want of courage to be alone with CHRIST that He may teach you your real condition—surely, you will not give yourself up as a prey into the hands of this enemy of God and man ! Surely you will not deliberately join the throng of those who, by hurrying on through life, are so deluded by Satan that they die with a confident hope that beyond the chasm of the grave they will find their Redeemer waiting to conduct them into the realms of eternal bliss, although they have never, in all their lives, given themselves time to repent and to believe and to form the character which is required in the heavenly Kingdom ! Surely, you will not compel the LORD Who looked so tenderly on the wearied faces of His disciples—the LORD Who loved you enough to agonize on the Cross for your redemption—surely you will not compel Him, in respect for that free-will which is your birthright, to

leave you to the darkness which you have chosen, while He utters over you the divine lament :—

“Oh, that thou hadst known, at least in that thy day, the things which belonged to thy peace ; but now they are hid from thine eyes. Thou hast had thine own way ; thou hast gained the world which thou didst desire—but thou hast lost thy soul. Oh, that thou hadst hearkened unto Me, and come apart into the desert place to rest a while, to commune with thy LORD, and to be still !”

V

ADDRESS TO CHURCH WORKERS¹

"He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen."—
REV. i. 17, 18.

EVERY "Church"—in the smaller sense of the word, like our Church of S. Peter's—has its own mark. Pergamos and Smyrna and Thyatira—each of the Seven Churches—has its own distinctive characteristic, in its corporate capacity as a Church. There may be individuals in each who do not possess this characteristic; but the mark of Smyrna, the mark of Laodicea, or any other, is distinct and separate.

They differ, not merely in their practical life, but in the doctrines which have specially laid hold upon them; the divine thought—or thoughts—revealed to each.

In one sense, of course, all are alike. There is one LORD, one Faith, one Baptism, one GOD and FATHER of us all. We cannot repeat our Creeds without acknowledging that in one sense we all hold the same truth:

"The Church's one Foundation
Is JESUS CHRIST her LORD."

And here let me say, in passing, that experience has convinced me that the differences between English Churchmen are far less than our enemies picture them to be. I say what I have reason for knowing; there is far more unity than a superficial student of the facts

¹ St. Peter's, Eaton Square, Sunday Afternoon, April 15th, 1883.

of his age would imagine. And yet, some parts of God's teaching seem to be emphasized for each separate Church : and these portions of God's eternal truth are not so emphasized to the same Church at all periods ; sometimes, only for a certain definite period.

It is very interesting to watch the way by which these truths are emphasized. Sometimes it is through a crushing sorrow coming to some member of the community ; sometimes, through a special effort, like a mission, or a quiet day ; sometimes, by the silent working of the HOLY GHOST, through the ordinary means of grace, the ordinary services. Sometimes it springs up in the teacher ; sometimes in those who are taught. Sometimes the thought comes to one of the people, and passes from one to the other, till at last it becomes the common portion of the whole community, and the only office of the person set over the Church as pastor, is simply, as the organ of the body, to put it out. At another time, the thought comes first to the clergyman. He prays ; he thinks ; he takes counsel, first with his clergy, then with the laymen whom he can trust as wise and understanding men : and at last, as when it proceeded first from the laity, it is realized as the heritage of the whole Church. The teacher brings it forth ; the people embrace it ; God confirms it by tokens of His blessing.

And so, as years roll on, the little community becomes impregnated with these special truths. The "parish" is first influenced. And then, without destroying the corporate feeling of the parish, individual persons from outside feel sympathy with the truths enunciated, and become part and parcel of the parish : often, its very leaders, though living outside its natural limits.

I am rather suggesting thoughts than working them out for you : thoughts drawn from my own experience.

And then, when these truths have been laid hold of, there has been—here, at least—a very remarkable experience. I am not speaking now of those who go out of this world into Paradise to fulfil the promise of the Revelation that, with the mark of CHRIST more clearly seen upon them than ever, they shall serve their LORD; but of those who still remain on earth. One after another, some of those who are the most full of attachment to the parish, and who have the most fully drunk in of its spirit, have been taken away from us. On account of health and various other circumstances, they have been taken away; some of them for half a year at a time, others entirely. And yet those persons, whenever they come back, though for only one Sunday in a year, are among the warmest friends of the work.

First, they have drunk in of the spirit of the parish; and then they have become purified and braced, by being taken away from what was possibly becoming to them a "hot bed." They have been braced by more solitary communion with GOD; and, without such frequent means of grace, they have become greater powers for God, perhaps, in other parts of the world, than they would have been if they had remained in S. Peter's.

It has been wonderful! What is happening now to myself is only one instance of what I have watched for years; it is my turn, now, to go out and see how I can manage; to do what I have so often tried to teach others, to go out in the power of God, and see how they can live with less outward help, and more entire dependence on the Living God.

Those who are thus scattered abroad realize that they are "strangers and pilgrims": but, thank God, now that they are scattered in every part of the world, they proclaim like heralds the Word which they have received. "They which were scattered abroad," in the early days

of the Church, "went everywhere preaching the Word." God grant that he who is going out now may have the courage and strength to do the same!

And now let me briefly put before you a summary of those truths which seem to have been taught to us—or rather emphasized—at sundry times and in divers manners, during the last thirteen years. I do not mean, as you know, that those truths are not as well taught by God to other Churches as to our own. But, in looking back over the thirteen years, certain truths seem to have had a special power.

1. The completeness of Redemption. We have been taught that we have not to work up to the Cross, but to believe in the finished work of our LORD: that the LORD JESUS, now within the veil, has made a full, perfect, and complete offering for us. We have learnt the power of that atoning Blood; the fullness of Redemption; the glad tidings to be carried to every human being; pardon to be received on the ground of what the LORD has done for us, as the beginning, and not the end, of the conscious Christian life.

2. The LORD JESUS CHRIST, to Whom we owe this Atonement, has been made, by His FATHER, not merely the Guide of individual souls, but the Head of a Body, the Church. This is brought out in the Epistle to the Ephesians. And the HOLY SPIRIT seems to have taught us the glad tidings of a "Kingdom." CHRIST is the Head of His Body, the Church. We are baptized into His Body: not scattered fragments.

3. While it has never been our habit to speak, except with deep sorrow, of that other branch of the Church which is called the Roman Communion; or of the terrible deficiencies of those who separate themselves from the one Catholic and Apostolic Church; yet there has been a clear note sounded, I trust, by clergy and

laity, that this Church Catholic, through the Anglican branch established in this land, gives to us the Prayer Book as our guide; and, where the Prayer Book is difficult of interpretation, the chief pastor set over us by God, "the Ordinary."

This has been accepted among us, as a body. In the year 1874, after the great London Mission, the parish was rent in twain. But it recognized this principle: that which the Prayer Book accepts, we accept. By that standard we were guided; and, thank God, united, as we have been ever since. The Prayer Book has been our guide.

4. There has come out strongly the fact of our regeneration, as set forth in the Catechism. We have been taught to love our God, not in order to win His love, but "because He first loved us," and made us members of CHRIST and children of GOD. We have been taught that our FATHER, when we go back to Him, is the "Father" of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Who says not, "This man has become My child to-day, because he has repented": but, "this My son was dead," but was still My son, however dead; he "was dead, and is alive again; he was lost,"—but still, My son—"and is found."

5. We have been taught that regeneration involves conversion; that we are regenerated, in order that we may be converted. God has taught us the reality of conversion—sometimes by missions, sometimes by the strange power of a text, preached by different mouths—a text as simple as this, "Be still," or, "JESUS went out and departed from the Temple"; sometimes by great upheavings of the parish. We have learned that the free-will which GOD has given to man is to be *used*; that we are not taken, as babies in swaddling clothes, from the font to Paradise; but that, sooner or later, gradually

or suddenly, by the power of that will which God has given him, the individual has to acknowledge his guilt, to believe in CHRIST, and to yield himself up to the living King. We have seen the need of conversion—whatever word we may have used—or that which is symbolized by “conversion.”

6. Then, thank God, as the next truth, we have learnt that this conversion and peace through the Precious Blood of CHRIST are not the end of life, but the beginning. We are to go forward : there is to be growth.

7. Next, we have recognized, however imperfectly, that all this is done through the help, not of a system, not of material progress, or increasing civilization, or man's natural efforts, but by the power of a living Being, of One Who is GOD, as the FATHER and the SON are GOD : the HOLY GHOST, the Giver of life : awakening souls by the Word, feeding them with the Word and Sacraments, communicating life, comforting, guiding, leading them into the peace and joy of the Resurrection life.

8. We have seen how the HOLY SPIRIT, however much He may use other books, works this wonderful work, whether it be of awakening, comforting, or sanctifying, through the written Word. To honour the Bible, to expound the Bible, to read the Bible together—clergy with laity, laity alone—this, thank God, has been one of the “marks” of S. Peter's.

9. And then—to use the words and the order of the Prayer Book—after the “Word” by which we are quickened, come the “Sacraments” by which we are fed. Of Baptism I have already spoken. It is emphasized ; it is put, as the Prayer Book desires it to be put, into the middle of the service ; performed simply, but, as far as can be accomplished, reverently, with solemn dignity.

And Holy Communion has had its right place ; the place given to it by early Christians. Once every day, for many a year, has there been Holy Communion in this church. Over and over, have fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, come quietly at that early hour—snatching moments from the death-bed, it may be, of the son or the mother or the wife whom they loved—to be fed, through the power of the HOLY SPIRIT, with that Living Bread, and to drink of that Living Water.

10. Our eyes have been opened to see something of the value of prayer. Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, you are feeling—what I am feeling—how little, how imperfectly, we have used all this ! How the thought comes to us, “Would to God that I could begin again !” But this is not the time for morbid, depressing thoughts: it is the time to brace up our energies, and use the power of the Resurrection life ! We have seen the ladder set up from earth to heaven ; we have realized that in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving for the past, our requests may be made known unto God. Every Saturday evening, at our quiet prayer meeting, the long list of petitions has been offered. District visitors have come to pray that doors might be opened to them in their districts ; Sunday school teachers, that bad children might be made good ; others, that dangers might be averted, or that workers might be enabled to speak for God with a power not their own, or sick people raised up again. There are some in this church to-day who remember the time when they were lying in the valley of the shadow of death, and the petition was sent for them. It mattered not who took the prayer meeting, or who were present : there were enough to plead together the promise : “Verily I say unto you, if two of you shall agree on earth as touching

any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My FATHER which is in heaven."

I have known hundreds of definite answers that have been given to the prayers of the congregation. Some are more striking than others ; but, for myself, it is the cumulative weight of the evidence, the hundreds upon hundreds of quiet prayers quietly answered, that has most impressed me.

11. And then, God has taught us that religion is not mere sentiment. He has put a practical character upon it all : alms, time ; absolute surrender of the entire life, in some cases. Men and women have gone out and worked : there has been personal service—

"With one hand work, and with the other pray,
And God will bless them both, from day to day."

With regard to the direction in which the work and the alms were to go, the Bible has been our guide : "beginning at Jerusalem" ; charity beginning at home, but not ending at home. First, it has extended, in the East of London, to the Jews, God's own people, after the flesh ; then to the East of London generally ; then to other parts of England ; then, "like circles widening round," to the uttermost parts of the earth.

12. Then, we have learnt the value of worship : the right of our God to have our best—a truth which perhaps at times has fastened on my own mind more than any other. Nothing prospered, though my own mind at first was set against it, till the music was made better than it used to be. We tried, for months, to get a site for S. John's, but till we had opened a subscription to improve our parish church, so that there might be proper worship, we were unable to provide a church for the poor. We were obliged to begin with S. Peter's ; and then, when we had begun to make God's house more

worthy of Him, then—through the kindness of one who has now entered into his rest—the site for S. John's was found, the church for the poor was provided.

13. Lastly—I have placed them side by side with the thirteen years—God has taught us to think of Paradise and of the Advent. By strange and blessed discipline, though hard to bear at the time, and often hard to bear even now ; by taking quietly within the veil numbers of our best workers—those who seemed most needed—our LORD has taught us something of the reality of Paradise, and has led us to think more of that day when the angel shall tell us that our LORD is here, and we shall feel that right hand laid upon us, and shall hear that Voice saying, "Fear not : I am He that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore."

Redemption ; the Church ; the Prayer Book our guide ; Regeneration ; Conversion ; Progress ; the Personality of the HOLY GHOST ; the value of the Bible ; of the two Sacraments ; of Prayer ; Worship ; Paradise and the Advent !

And now, dear brethren, very briefly, I would warn you of the dangers. There is a great danger, whatever God has taught us as a Church, of turning the blessing into a curse, in several ways.

1. We are tempted to ignore other truths, which God may have very distinctly revealed to other Churches. There was a time when we rather prided ourselves on belonging to "S. Peter's"—as if we were any better than S. Michael's or S. Paul's, or as if each of them had not its own mission ! Whenever this habit of ignoring other truths is indulged, there comes a great crash, when the old order changes. I have no idea who is coming here. God may see well to emphasize for a few more years these particular truths, or He may make some other truths more emphatic to us. If that habit had

been fostered, of ignoring other truths, then, the moment a new truth was put forth, the whole parish would feel bound to rise up, in loyalty to the old tradition, and to ignore and despise the new revelation, though from the same God, taught by the same Spirit, out of the same Bible!

2. There is a danger of losing what we have received, both in doctrine and practice. I have found it over and over again in my own life, and seen it in the lives of workers. Unless we continually go back to the Bible, and feed our minds with the old truths, and have them taught afresh by the HOLY SPIRIT, they lose their power. Some of the most evangelical Christians have fallen into utter bondage, because they thought that, having once believed and realized peace, they had got it for life! It is only by continual acts of faith, grasping, as it were, the hand of CHRIST—it is only by continually allowing the divine sap to flow in from the Vine to the branches, that we are safe.

3. There is the danger of holding the truths which we have received, as a possession, not as a solemn trust; of keeping them like corn laid up in the barn, instead of going everywhere and scattering the good seed.

You, my dear brethren, God seems in a special sense to have given to him who now speaks. There are some of these truths which you do know. Spiritualize them! Make them new, by communion with God, and by feeding on the Bible.

And then, remember that you have a "priesthood"; that there is a priesthood of the laity in their office, as well as a priesthood of the clergy in theirs. "To do good and to communicate, forget not." While the new clergyman is busy—and he will have enough to do!—you can be quietly telling others what you have learnt; passing on the old truths, influencing others to be prac-

tical Christians, open witnesses for CHRIST : telling to others quietly, as opportunities occur, the power of the Precious Blood, the reality of conversion, the blessings of the Sacraments, etc.

You have, each of you, a mission. In the Name of the LORD GOD, Who has blessed you all these years, I solemnly exhort you to fulfil it !

And when heart and flesh fail, when the old truths lose their power, or new truths perplex, remember Him Who has ever said to us, "Come unto Me, all that labour and are heavy laden. Come unto Me, the Fountain of all Truth, and you will never ignore any fragment of My FATHER's revelation. Come unto Me, Who am alive, and you will never become mere dead Christians, living on the experience of the past : you will live, with an ever-living hold of the truths which have been taught to you. Come unto Me, your LORD, and I will lay the right hand of My power upon you, and I will say unto you, Fear not ; I am He that liveth, and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore. I am the Alpha and the Omega ; the End as well as the Beginning ; the Last as well as the First ; the same for ever, as well as yesterday and to-day."

VI

VICTORY

"And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not : behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."
—REV. V. 5.

THERE is something, I think, brethren, very remarkable in the account given by S. Luke of the conduct of the disciples after our LORD was taken from them.

When we have lost one whom we love, we may be able to school our souls into resignation, and to crush all murmuring thoughts. But this is a very different thing from what we read of the disciples here : this "great joy" with which they returned to Jerusalem. And yet no human bereavement can be compared with the loss experienced by the disciples. The Light of their hearts, the Guide of their footsteps, that dear Elder Brother into Whose ears every sorrow had been whispered, every thought confided, had been taken from them : and this at a most critical period, just when they seemed to need Him most.

How was this ? Whence that "great joy" ? For these disciples were, like ourselves, very weak, needing help, even as we ourselves need it. Only a few weeks before, the enemies' swords flashing through the olive-trees had sufficed to dispel their courage, and to make them forsake Him Whom they were pledged to follow. But now there seems no room left for cowardice. No

longer, now, does the son of Jonas fear to be reckoned among "this Man's disciples." No longer, now, does Thomas refuse to believe. They were "continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God." How is this?

The answer to that question is found in our text. He Who in olden days had made the storm a calm, and dried the widow's tears at Nain—He by Whom the funeral dirge at Bethany had been changed into the hymn of Resurrection joy—He has said to the little band of disciples, "Weep not."

The imagery used in this passage needs explanation. Through the door opened in heaven, S. John, in rapture, beheld a throne, and One that sat on the throne. In His hand S. John beheld "a book"—a roll, written within and without: not only on one side, according to Eastern custom. There was no blank space. That commandment was "exceeding broad"; its fullness overflowed all tablets of human record. On that roll all the events of our lives are traced. The life of each of us is known to God from all eternity. "Known unto God are all His works, from the foundation of the world." The book was written within and without.

But—it was "sealed"! No human hand can break that seal. Let the cry ring out from east to west: "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" The world is full of great men: let them show "the things that are coming and shall come!" (*Isa.* xliv. 7; xli. 22, 23, 26.) No; "there is none that showeth—none that declareth." None can unravel the mysteries of the divine counsels. "No man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon."

S. John "wept much," he tells us, "because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon." And then the words of the text were

spoken to him : " Weep not : behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."

These titles, of course, refer to JESUS CHRIST Himself. As Man, He sprang from the tribe of Judah. He was " the Root of David " ; the " Rod out of the stem of Jesse." (*Isa.* xi. 1.) And He was " the Lamb as it had been slain " (*Rev.* v. 6) ; the " Lamb without blemish and without spot " (*1 S. Pet.* i. 19) ; " the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (*S. John* i. 29 ; *Isa.* liii. 6, 7.)

Those " seven horns " symbolize His power : strong in His glorious Humanity no less than in His eternal Godhead.

The " seven eyes " are " the seven Spirits of God " ; the sevenfold gifts of the HOLY GHOST, Who searcheth into the depths of the human spirit. Around the throne were the four-and-twenty elders, symbolizing the Church of the redeemed : twelve of the Old Covenant and twelve of the New Covenant.

The four living beings represent the varied powers of Nature. " In the midst of the throne . . . stood a Lamb as it had been slain." The Man CHRIST JESUS, fresh from the sacrifice of Calvary, we see exalted to-day as the centre of all authority, the LORD of Creation, the Head of His Church, King of kings and Lord of lords, in that region of peace and joy where the angels dwell, and where resound the songs of the redeemed.

And then, as on our Whitsunday, He sends down the Comforter, the HOLY GHOST, to comfort us and to purify us, and to exalt us to the same place where He is gone before, and liveth and reigneth world without end.

Such is the general outline of this glorious vision. True, it had not yet been revealed to the Apostles in all its details ; the Church had yet to wait for the gift

of the Paraclete. But during those forty days their minds had been familiarized with the most important features. They had learned to look back on the Cross, and to read something of its meaning. The "roll" of their own future was yet sealed. They only knew that bonds and imprisonment awaited them. And doubtless it often saddened their human spirit to remember their LORD's words: "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth GOD service." The facts of their destiny were unaltered. But the spirit in which those facts were regarded by them was altered. Before their LORD's death on Calvary, their thoughts centred on self. Each had his own vision of earthly happiness; they pictured scenes of earthly joy; thrones to which the Redeemer was to exalt His faithful followers. And so, of course, when the crash came—when they saw the Master from Whom they expected those rewards of service, crucified between two thieves, their visions of earthly glory were dissipated; nothing was left for them but mourning and weeping. But now, new thoughts had arisen within them. As they listened to His Resurrection teachings their hearts began to beat with nobler aspirations. They learnt to cease from self, and to look above. They lost the thought of self in thoughts of their LORD. They knew that the "roll" of their future was in His hands: that He had power to break the seals of that revelation which they were unable to decipher. Therefore, they can rejoice in His joy to-day: they can rejoice that He has finished His work. They will work or suffer, live or die, as He wills. This is their one idea of life. And so, as brave men, they go back to-day to the Temple at Jerusalem, "praising and blessing God."

Now, brethren, how is it with us? Which do we resemble—the disciples at the Cross, or those same

disciples after His Ascension, returning to Jerusalem with great joy?

Religion consists not so much in any details of outward surroundings, as in a principle of life. There must be a centre, round which the life of every one of us revolves. What is that centre? Is it self? Whether a degraded or a refined self—is self the centre of our being? Let us honestly answer that question before God. Is our mind set on “earthly things”? (*Phil.* iii. 19.) Is the best of our time, of our strength, of our money, spent on self? What shall I gain? What shall I wear? How do I look? Where shall I go to enjoy myself? How can I gain most spiritual comfort—the greatest amount of happy feelings? How can I get rid of these troublesome cares? Are these the main current of our daily thoughts? Or, are we learning to make JESUS CHRIST the centre of our being? How can I best please Him? How much can I—not how much must I—spare of my time, my strength, my money, that He may see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied? I put it to each of you: is self, or CHRIST, the centre of your life?

God help us to decide aright; for the issue of that choice is not hard to decipher! Whether we will or not, let self be first, and our sorrows will be multiplied: the shadows will deepen, as life advances, and the silver cord is loosed, and the golden bowl is broken. (*Ps.* xvi. 4; *Gal.* vi. 7, 8; *Eccles.* xii. 3–7.) The cowardice of a S. Peter, or even the hopeless despair of a Judas, may, unless God in His love arrest the downward progress, become our portion. But let CHRIST be the centre, and the joy of the disciples shall be ours. The daily self-denial, the cross-bearing, the manifold temptations, these, of course, will remain—the dark weary hours, the crushing sense of failure. But in the midst of

all this utter helplessness, a power of God shall be secretly revealed which no words can describe. A power will come down to raise us, in spirit, above this lower world. There will be strange glimpses also, through that open door, and echoes from that crystal sea ; voices to cheer us on the upward march ; the voices of those who have gone before, and the voice of our crucified and ascended LORD ; the voice of Him Who can make life happier as the shadows deepen ; the voice of Him Who holds the "roll" of the future in His own pierced hand ; the voice of Him Who loves us, Who can make His strength perfect in our weakness, Who can dry every tear, and nerve every feeble will, and send us back from that Eucharistic feast praising and blessing Him in heaven for ever ! Thanks be to GOD, if CHRIST is indeed the centre of our life ! "Thanks be to GOD, which giveth us the victory, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST !"

My brethren, words like these are easily spoken. God knows, and we know, how hard they are to realize and to embody in our daily life. The more we try to get rid of self, the more does its hateful presence make itself felt. But the things which are impossible with men are possible with God. It is the Will of God to deliver us from all evil. The HOLY GHOST lives to reveal the Saviour to us. And our ascended LORD has left us these words, which can never fail : "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the FATHER in My Name, He will give it you. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His Will, He heareth us."

VII

JESUS HIMSELF

"Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them."

S. LUKE xxiv. 36.

"JESUS Himself!" Our LORD here distinctly claims for Himself the consciousness of His personal identity. A few verses lower down He says, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself"; or as it might be perhaps more clearly translated, "I am Myself."

There is, perhaps, my brethren, nothing of which we are more certain, and yet which we should find more difficult to prove, than this fact of our personal identity. What is it that causes each of us to be sure that we are ourselves? There is something deeper than the ever-varying emotions which well up from the fountain of our heart in times of excitement. There is something deeper than those intellectual throes with which we wrestle for the mastery in some argument. There is a strange, undefinable something of which we are conscious, which separates us off from all the rest of creation. What is it? and how can we prove it?

This is not the place for lengthened answers to questions such as these. Suffice it is to say, that whatever it be which gives to you and to me this consciousness that we are ourselves; that, in spite of all the alterations in thought and feeling, from the days of childhood to the present hour, we are the same boy or girl, transformed into man or woman, who prayed at

our mother's knee, or said the first lesson in the childish school—such consciousness, JESUS CHRIST asserts here of Himself. He is conscious that He is "the same." He recalls an unbroken life. He looks back, as it were, to the hour when He chanted the songs of David before His Crucifixion. He looks back to the time when, wearied out with the long day's toil, He fell asleep in the little boat on the Lake of Galilee. "I am Myself." He knows that He has been the same in it all; that there has been a continuity of existence. "I am Myself."

Our LORD takes every means to manifest this consciousness of His personal identity. He is not satisfied with merely feeling, believing, knowing, that He is the same. He evidences it to His disciples in many ways. For instance, would it help us, if wavering as to the fact of our own identity, to look at some mark that we remember to have received perhaps in some boyish game? JESUS CHRIST takes that hand which the disciples had seen nailed to the Cross on Calvary, and He shows them in it the mark of that nail by which it was pierced. He says, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself."

Does it help us, when doubtful of the identity of a friend, to hear him remembering the old names, taking up the broken thread of the earlier life? JESUS CHRIST takes up the old name, "Simon, son of Jonas"; as if He would say, "I remember all the associations that gather round thy childhood and thy boyhood, and the day when thou wast first enrolled as My disciple." And in the simplest and most natural manner, in the bright early morning in the quiet garden, He seems to forget the little parenthesis of the grave and Paradise, of death and the Resurrection, and takes up the broken thread of the discourse, saying, "Mary!" He calls her by the name that had been so familiar in the olden days. Also,

before He died, He had said, "After that I am risen I will go before you into Galilee." And now He is gone to Galilee. It is the message of the Resurrection. "Tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee : there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you." (*S. Mark* xiv. 28 ; xvi. 7.)

But there is something still more assuring to us than any outward mark, or recollection of bygone facts, when we would convince ourselves that the friend from whom we have been parted for twenty or thirty years is really the same. It is comparatively of little importance that the hands and the feet are the same, or that a few isolated events of childhood have not been forgotten. But, as we come to hold sweet converse with him in the quiet eventide, we discover that the character—though deepened, it may be, and grown stronger by conflict in life's hard battle—is the same. The sister falls on the neck of the sister, or the brother clasps the brother's hand, and says, half unconsciously, "Thank God, you are not altered !" And so, in the "forty days," if you have time to study the Bible, in this hurrying age, you will come upon little incidents and words, like bright flowers growing up in the garden of the LORD, assuring us that JESUS CHRIST was not altered by His Resurrection, so far as His character was concerned.

And what is that character ? This is the practical point to which I want to lead you. What is that character ?

"Who can express the noble acts of the LORD, or show forth all His praise ?" Who of men is able to expound the character of Him Who is very God as well as very Man ; the Incarnate Word, JESUS of Nazareth ?

It may help us, however, to look at two strongly marked characteristics of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. We

find in the character of our Saviour two qualities which are very rarely found on earth combined, but which, when found united in any individual, exercise an influence almost irresistible. I refer to the two qualities of strength and of tenderness. The two are seldom united. Generally speaking, strength is looked upon as the mark of manhood; tenderness of womanhood. If we find a man infirm of purpose, with a weak, wavering will, "everything by turns, and nothing long," devoid, in fact, of strength of character, we pity him. If we find a woman—however clever and however able—wanting in tenderness, we shun her. Our own poet has expressed the difference between man and woman in reference to this, clearly and beautifully. You remember the passage. It is where he has been saying that "woman is not undeveloped man, but diverse"; and then he describes it in that one line: "Perfect music, linked to noble words." Strong words—soft music.

Now, my brethren, we find in the LORD JESUS CHRIST—Who was not merely man or woman, but man and woman, perfect humanity, the crown of manhood, the perfection of womanhood—we find in Him the two, strength and tenderness. And it is this combination of gentle compassion with infinite power that has made the character of Jesus irresistible in every age and in every land; fulfilling the promise of the Incarnate One, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

O tender Saviour, wounded unto death, and yet strong in the consciousness of an indomitable power, rolling on and on through all the ages of eternity, Thou art strong enough to command our confidence, tender enough to win our love! Thou art One Whom we can take as our Leader and Commander, our Counsellor and Guide, wherever we are, and whatever our circumstances;

One Whose wisdom will never fail us ; Whose power will never be vanquished ; One Who, on that "white horse," shall lead us forth, "conquering and to conquer": and yet so tender, so gentle, so ready to forgive; whispering into our ears, as we lie down weary with the long, hard struggle against the world and the flesh and the devil, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

I have tried, my brethren, to lead you on, step by step, from the thought of personal identity up to the character of JESUS CHRIST ; and I would ask you, during these forty days, to follow out the thought which has now been suggested. Take the few recorded conversations of our LORD JESUS CHRIST during those forty days. We find out the character of a friend by his words and by his deeds ; and the accumulation of those words and deeds gives us at last an assurance that no false slander can ever shake. We know our friend. And so, as we meditate upon the words and acts of CHRIST in the forty Resurrection-days, there grows up in our hearts a consciousness that He is true and strong and tender ; and whenever the devil rises up, the accuser of God and man, to paint Him in different colouring, the meditations of Eastertide, under the power of God the HOLY SPIRIT, will have given us an armour which is simply impregnable. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." And "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Consider each word of CHRIST during the forty days. "Be not afraid," "Why are ye troubled?" "Peace be unto you !" Gentle, tender words, falling like soft rain upon the new-mown grass. And yet, how powerful ! Think of those few poor men, hidden in an upper room at Jerusalem, for fear of the Jews. JESUS stands in the midst. "Peace be unto you," He says,

“as My FATHER hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the HOLY GHOST : whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” And again, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST : teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” “Go ye into all the world — beyond the narrow limits of Judaism, across the wide, untravelled ocean, on to the far-off isles of Britain and the forest wilds of Germany, onward to the utmost parts of the earth — till I come back, with all the holy angels, to gather My people unto Myself, and to reign as King for all eternity.”

Such, my dear brethren, are the underlying thoughts of Eastertide ; the identity and the strength and tenderness of that character, “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” Do you see the practical import of it all ? Do you see why, by the help of God, I have tried to bring it before you ? Because, if once we have satisfied ourselves that JESUS CHRIST, Who stood in the midst of the disciples in that upper room in Jerusalem, was really the same Being that was nailed to the Cross, then, standing, as it were, on the bridge of the forty days, we look back, and we have gained one firm footing ; and that is what men want in the present day. The neglect of this firm footing is the great mistake that men make, when they are perplexed by those doubts and difficulties to which few earnest minds have been all their life strangers. Difficulties and anxieties about the Faith, and perplexing doubts, are part of the discipline to which

we are subjected : and the way to grapple with them is to find some strong foundation on which we can stand.

We satisfy the mind first, perhaps, that there is a GOD. We satisfy the mind, next, that JESUS of Nazareth was the SON of GOD. Or, if we have advanced further, to the point which we are considering to-day, we take our stand on the strong ground of these forty days. Looking back from the forty days, we take all the words of CHRIST recorded in the Gospels. The same Being, Who was alive in those forty days, spoke those words unto us. They are ours.

Then, we look forward, and we see Him ascended into heaven ; and we are allowed to watch the veil drawn back as He appears to S. John and to S. Paul in the after-history. It is always the same character. "Fear not," He says to S. John. There is the tenderness. And then, the power. "I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen : and have the keys of hell and of death." (*Rev.* i. 18.) And to S. Paul : "I am JESUS of Nazareth, Whom thou persecutest : it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. . . . Depart : for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." (*Acts* ix. 5, xxii. 8, 21.) "Go up to Rome and be martyred. Die, and thou shalt live the glorious life infused by My Spirit through the power of My Resurrection."

So we look back from the forty days, and we look onward ; and every word of CHRIST becomes eloquent to us. We realize what the LORD meant when He said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." For, having seen the whole life of CHRIST—from the birth in the manger to the glory of the Second Advent—united, as it were, in one beauteous rainbow of light and glory, we are "still" ; the words of CHRIST become to us words of power. "The words that

I speak unto you," He said, "they are spirit"—not mere human words—"and they are life." For He Who spoke them is very GOD ; He is the same to-day that He was in the forty days ; the same that He was on the hills of Galilee. The words that He speaks are words of power, because they are the words of the Living GOD.

My brethren, prove it ! Have you sinned, and are you hiding, like Adam in the garden, away from GOD ; cowering like a slave, afraid to come out from the degradation, and to acknowledge the sins that are past ? Take a word of JESUS CHRIST's, as "Peace be unto you !" Picture those hands, pierced. Picture the mark of the soldier's sword in His side ; and lie down at His feet in spirit, in your quiet room to-day, and say, "O LORD, help me ! Help me to believe ! I have sinned !" Tell it all, bit by bit, to Him. He will never reproach you, for He is tender. He will never upbraid you, for He lived to forgive. He will never send you away, because He has said, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Ask Him to break the chains from off your neck. Ask Him to say to you, as He said to those women whom He met on the first Easter morn : "All hail ! Be not afraid !"

And as you lie there, if only you will be patient and persevere, you shall find a mighty power flowing down from CHRIST Himself, which shall set you free from that burden of sin which has crushed you to the ground. You shall be brought out from the darkness and dreary desolation of not knowing whether GOD loves you, or does not love you. And so the words of CHRIST Who died, yea rather, Who is risen again—"Peace be unto you"—shall come with a power that never all your life you shall forget ; though very quietly, very calmly. Sometimes I have seen strong men stricken down ; but

there is no need of this. "Peace be unto you!" The Word has power.

But is that all? When we have stood up, strong in the confidence that God loves us, is there no other word? Is there no other word for the Apostle Peter, but the word of tenderness and absolution? God forbid such an ungenerous thought! We must work and fight, and, if need be, die for Him.

The LORD is going forth on a great battle in this world of ours. He is setting free the souls that Satan has bound these many years. He would touch blind eyes by your hands. He would speak to deaf ears by your voice. You and I have been called, by our very Baptism, into His glorious conquering army. We have a Leader so gentle that we can go, as it were, to His tent at night, and tell Him that we are afraid of to-morrow's warfare, that the hard battle has weakened our nerves, that the devil is strong, and we are weak. And He will take us, like a woman, in His tenderness, with our armour still stained by the battlefield, and will gently let us lean—as S. John did at that last Supper—on His breast; and He will whisper into our hearts words of strength, so that, calmly and solemnly, yet with intense love, we shall stand unmoved in this great London, with all its fascination, saying, "I live, yet not I, but CHRIST liveth in me. I am not my own; the love of CHRIST has constrained me; because I thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Who loved them, and gave Himself for them."

My brethren, let us grasp the fact that JESUS CHRIST is the same Who led on those Apostles to victory, Who made the oracles of Greece to be silent, and the proud temples of Rome to crumble into dust. Let us believe that He

is the same ; that He is still with us in this nineteenth century : and let us rise up, and He will lead us—poor, weak, helpless beings as we are—out of the darkness of unpardoned sin into the light and peace of believing, out from the selfish cowardice of simply living for self—whether it be a spiritual or an earthly self—to repeat the triumphs by which in olden days the world was laid low beneath the banner of the Crucified.

“All power,” said GOD Incarnate, “is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore”—ye whom GOD has called and blessed with priceless talents—“go ye into all the world, and carry the Gospel. By your prayers, by your testimony, by your life, by your liberal sacrifice of your money, carry it everywhere, in the power of the LORD Who lived and died and rose again.”

“Thanks be to GOD, which giveth us the victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST !”

VIII

THE LAST SERMON¹

"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."—ACTS i. 11.

THIS, my dear brethren, is Advent Sunday. To-day we are beginning a new Christian year—a new year. New! The very word is instinct with hope, ever causing an awakening and uprising.

"New perils passed, new sins forgiven,
New thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven."

What does Advent mean? What are the lessons which this Advent season on which we are entering is intended to teach us? Some of these lessons, I hope, will be explained on this and succeeding Sundays by those who will address you. But before I address myself to the special subject of Advent, there are some matters—first personal, and secondly affecting the Church—about which I desire to speak. And first, as to what is personal: I should, my people, be hard-hearted if I were able to stand unmoved in this pulpit to-day. The last time that I spoke to you here—the last Sunday in July—I had just, in God's Providence, recovered from a severe operation, of which the surgeon said that, humanly speaking, recovery was impossible, and that he

¹ Sermon preached at S. Ninian's Cathedral, Perth, on Advent Sunday, December 1, 1907, by the Most Rev. the Primus of the Scottish Church.

could only ascribe it to the prayers which had been offered on my behalf. Then we worshipped together on the last Sunday in July, and I was looking forward to all the happy work of the autumn—to the sermons at Aberfeldy, Pitlochry, and Kirriemuir, and the varied arrangements that had to be made. On that very Sunday week I was laid in my bed with congested lungs, there to remain for nearly six weeks. And then, again, you prayed for me, and God has raised me up, blessed be His holy Name, as strong and as well as I have ever been—barring only the natural limitations of advancing years. And I am here in God's holy house to thank Him—to thank Him for some lessons, at any rate, which I have learned in these weeks of discipline. No education, the Bible says, no chastening for the time, is joyous—God knows it is not that—but grievous. Nevertheless, afterwards, I trust, one gathers in some feeble fruits, and certainly I have learned (if I needed to learn) what a blessing God has given to me in the strength and help of Bishop Richardson, and of my Provost and the Precentor. I have learned what it is to have a beautiful cathedral like this, with the people trained to worship (God grant the worshipping may be developed an hundredfold), with the verger giving his life to the work of the Church right heartily; with every one ready to pray, ready to work, ready to co-operate with the bishop in any plan that is suggested. Thank God for that.

And I have seen visions. I have seen a vision of what this cathedral, founded under such peculiar circumstances, surrounded by the spirits and souls of the righteous who laboured for its erection—this Church of S. Ninian, carrying back our mind to the life of the saint to whom it is dedicated—I have had a vision of what this cathedral might be. I have seen all men and all women who have been confirmed coming to

obey the LORD's command : "Do this in remembrance of Me." I have watched them thronging up to the altar with pure hearts, humble, reverent, penitent, believing, trusting in the LORD and in the power of His might, to receive the unspeakable gift. I have seen every man and woman, part of the great Society, doing something for the service of CHRIST. I have pictured them going out into the back streets of our city and saving the poor lost ones, for whom no one seems to care. I pictured the church, the lads in the choir, every choirman, and every organist gathering in with full faith the power of GOD through the Blessed Sacrament of His Body and Blood. I have seen each little boy so pervaded and conquered by the divine atmosphere of the cathedral that it became impossible for him to be irreverent, though in the week-days he would enjoy his football and other games. (Long may they all be spared to enjoy them !) And I have seen these little boys training to be confirmed, about to come and have the bishop's hands laid upon them and be consecrated by the LORD of Life, in order that God the HOLY GHOST may enter in and take possession of them. "Then laid they their hands upon them, and they received the HOLY GHOST."

I must not go on with the vision that God, I humbly hope, has revealed to me. I have learned, I hope, to see the possibilities of the future ; and I trust—oh, my brethren, pray GOD it may be so !—I have learned to realize how slight is the tie that binds me to life, and Church, and home, and work ; how at any moment, and without any warning, I may be called to give up my staff into other hands and to pass out into the Great Unseen, and, in a sense, unknown world, where hundreds of holy bishops have gone before me into the more immediate Presence of my LORD.

Oh, my people, we must begin to pray as we have never prayed. We must begin to work as we have never worked. We must have done with the spending of our strength upon ourselves—bishop, priests, and people. We must begin to make real sacrifices for the LORD GOD Almighty, Who was crucified on Calvary to redeem us. There must be an end of doing just as we like, and the kind of work we enjoy. It must be an offering to the LORD of Life, crucified, ascended. "This same JESUS, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

Secondly, I have to speak to you of matters connected with the Church. I have to read to you a pastoral which in substance is being read in every church of the diocese this morning :

"To the Clergy and Faithful Laity in the Diocese of S. Andrews, Dunkeld, and Dunblane.

"My dear Brethren,—Next year will be an eventful year in the history of the Anglican Communion. Not only will bishops from every part of the world be assembled at Lambeth Palace, for the entire month of July, to consider the manifold problems which affect the life of the Church and Empire, but by way of preparation for the Conference, a Pan-Anglican Congress will be held in London from June 16th to June 23rd. The largest rooms in the Church House at Westminster have been taken, and the Albert Hall is engaged for every night. At this Congress, clergy and lay people, both men and women, will be present from the two hundred and ten dioceses outside the British Isles, as well as from the fifty-seven home dioceses. Coloured people, Kafirs, people from Central Africa, from India, America, China, Japan—all gathered together to take

counsel about the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. It will be not merely a glorious gathering, not merely a Congress to see how our commerce will be best developed, not a gathering for any merely earthly purpose—but to see how CHRIST can be honoured and how the Kingdom of JESUS CHRIST can be extended, and how souls can be saved—men brought out of darkness into light.

“At this Congress such problems as the following will be discussed—The conditions of trade and labour ; Christianity and Socialism ; how the power of religion can best influence family life ; how human thought can be brought to recognize the Truth as revealed in JESUS CHRIST ; how those who are working for God, whether ordained or unordained, may best be prepared for their ministry ; how unity among Christians can be restored ; how the white man in his isolation, in all parts of the earth, may be kept Christian ; and how the heathen may be won for Him Who died to redeem them.

“Papers are being prepared on these subjects, which will be discussed at this Congress, so that those who attend may be able to take an intelligent part in the discussions. These papers can be obtained for a few pence from the Rev. A. B. Mynors, Church House, Westminster.”

It is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of this effort as regards the increase of knowledge which it is likely to convey to all who take part in it ; the new methods which, under the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT, will in all probability be evolved, affecting the whole future policy of the Church.

And then, when all discussions are over, a Solemn Service is to be held in S. Paul's Cathedral, on S. John the Baptist's Day, 1908. At this service a thank-offering

is to be presented gathered from all the dioceses of the Anglican Communion—China, Japan, America, Africa, Asia—everywhere. One by one each bishop will present the gifts of his diocese as an acknowledgement of the goodness and mercy which God has shown to the Church. One bishop, it may be, will go up with £10,000. More than that was raised in Tasmania, I believe. Another bishop may go up with nothing. He would stand aside and watch his brethren bringing the contributions of their dioceses. And this offering in its entirety will be entrusted to archbishops, bishops, clergy, and laymen, and will be used in founding new bishoprics, helping those which already exist, and in other ways developing the work of the Church ; and any money of those who desire to ear-mark it can be ear-marked for our own missions in Chanda, Kaffraria, or any other special missions. I have remitted to a committee to take steps that the Diocese of S. Andrews, Dunkeld, and Dunblane may be worthily represented, alike at the Congress and in the thank-offering. I do not wish to stand up in S. Paul's Cathedral and tell the Church that my diocese only gave that which cost them nothing.

I have also sanctioned a prayer which is being used this morning, of which copies are to be obtained at this church, and which will, I hope, be used both privately and publicly.

First, we must begin to pray day by day. Secondly, we must begin carefully to study the papers which have been circulated. Thirdly, we must courageously, with manly courage, not like old women oppressed with nervous diseases, but bravely, openly appeal to every one whom we can influence for money and co-operation.

Brethren, we must pray. It is a great occasion, a unique opportunity. We must pray GOD the HOLY

GHOST to kindle our imagination, to give us a divine enthusiasm, something worthy of men who belong to a chosen generation and a royal priesthood, and a peculiar people ; men and women who have been called out of darkness into God's marvellous light. Let every one realize that they must show forth the praises of the Eternal Glorious Trinity. We need the divine enthusiasm that we may inspire others. My people, just try to realize what the last great service in S. Paul's Cathedral will be. The whole cathedral crowded with people, coloured and white, from North and South, and East and West—the whole cathedral filled with solemn holiness, the long line of bishops going one by one to lay on the altar the acknowledgement of God's goodness to this our Church through all the long ages. Try to realize what it will be to see, following the procession, a long procession of men and women who have offered, not love, not money only, but their lives themselves. One bishop already has offered himself. The Bishop of Glasgow offered himself, but was advised by those who have the right to advise to remain. Bishops, priests, men, women. Suppose there are twelve out of this diocese—twelve men and twelve women ; multiply this by 200. Think of the long line, the glorious devotion !

I have left myself only some five minutes in which to speak on the text. I must leave it—the text and the substance of the Advent teaching—to those who will address you in the coming weeks. But for this five minutes let me read once more the text. You remember the circumstances—the Apostles gathered round our LORD on the Mount of Ascension. Suddenly He begins to rise. Earth forgets her law of gravitation in obedience to the Will of her great Creator. He ascends. Clouds appear to come down and receive Him out of their sight. Then comes the angel message : “This same

JESUS, Whose hands you have handled, Whose voice you have heard—this same JESUS will so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven. The day the hour, knoweth no man—not even the angels—but He will come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” Some day—it may be to-morrow, it may be a thousand years hence—but the New Testament teaches clearly that some day He will come as He went, possibly only to be seen by those who are waiting for His appearing, quite quietly, as He ascends. We don’t know ; but He will appear. Oh, my people, I wish I had an hour in which I might speak to you of what the joy and the glory will be ! In spite of all our sins and unworthiness—all we have left undone and done amiss, through the precious Blood of JESUS CHRIST—we are allowed to see Him. Whenever this Advent comes, it will be a surprise to the generation then living. Think what it will be. No parting with wife, child, or friend, no breaking up of home ties ; gathered, caught up, we are told, to meet the LORD in the air. “So shall we be ever with the LORD.” My people, I am not speaking to those who will be lost. I am not speaking to those of whom the Living LORD said what they will have to bear will be like “the fire that cannot be quenched.” Oh, that anybody with whom we have eaten and drank and worshipped shall have to bear that ! But I am not speaking to them. I am speaking to you who, through GOD’S infinite mercy, will enter into the glorious Kingdom. Supposing the LORD JESUS did appear, we will say, on the last day of this year, how strange a man would feel who loved CHRIST but had “a drop too much” on the last night of the year ! How strange a young man would feel who had been tempted by bad companions and was in a room he ought never to have entered when his body was the temple of the HOLY

GHOST ! What would it be on that day to have had a clear call to give up everything and go out as a missionary, but to have rejected it ? to have been asked by JESUS CHRIST to go and help some poor waifs in our back streets, but we were too busy, too occupied with pleasure or money-making ? Oh, to look into His face, whether it is a bishop, or priest, man or woman, a boy or a girl : if we were to look, as some will look who will be saved and be with Him ; oh, to look (if I could realize it as I look at the picture at the end of the cathedral !) —to look into His face and hear Him say, “What ! hast thou forgotten Me ? I died for thee, poured out My Blood for thee. Marked with the Sacrament of Baptism, I laid My hands on thee at Confirmation. I fed thee spiritually with My very Body and Blood, and hast thou denied Me ?” Look upon Him ; think on Him so looking on you and me in the day of His power. “The LORD looked on Peter, and He went out and wept bitterly.” These tears will be as nothing compared to your tears or mine as we realize in the day of His Advent how He loved us, and how He longed for our perfect sanctification ; how He longed that we might help Him in saving the world He died to redeem. When you are tempted to be money-loving, to be worldly, to be cowardly, oh, say over and over again, “This same JESUS, Who died for me shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” Can we sing really, “O come, O come, Emmanuel,” and then be slack about our Communion and our prayers, and our work for God, and our obedience to His call ?

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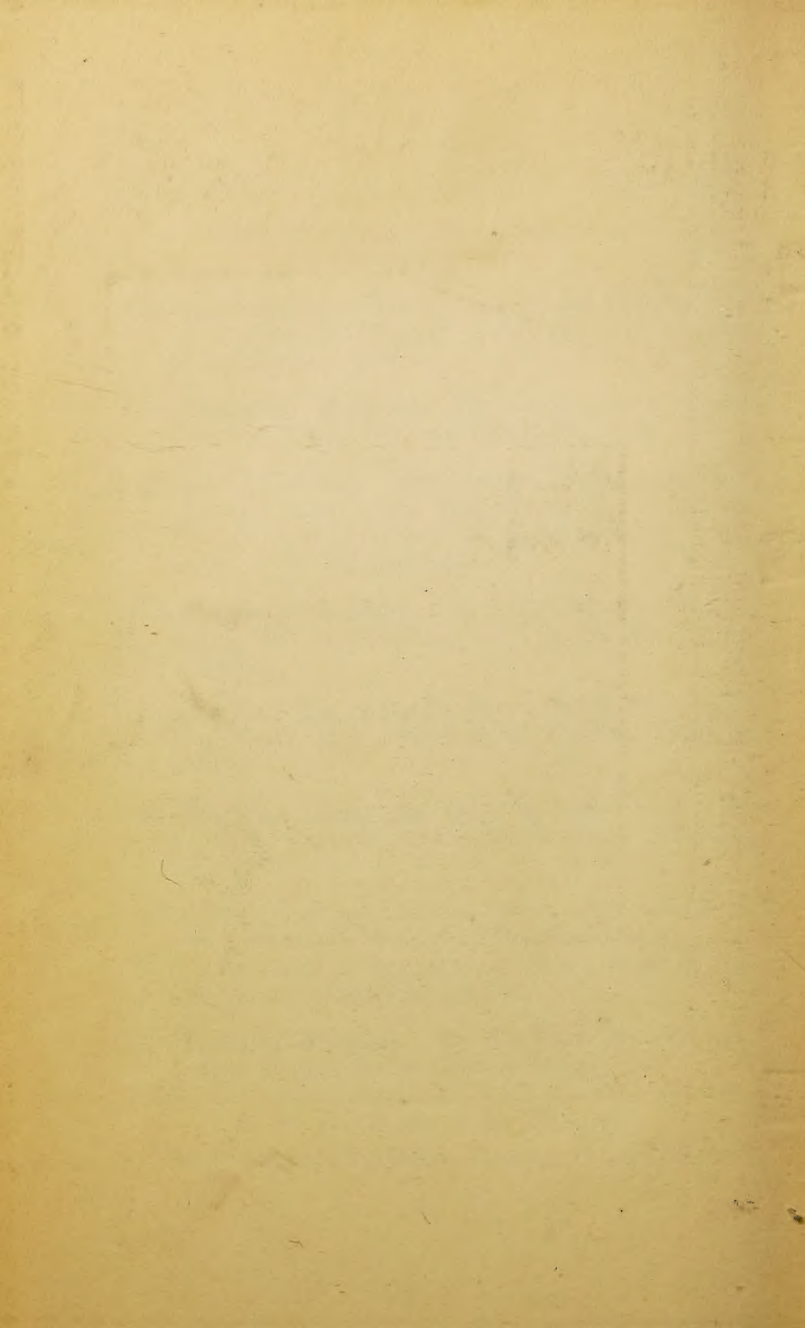
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